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Jingle balls

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ONLY a few weeks ago, attorney-general Lord Goldsmith was indignant at the suggestion that he shouldn't be the man to decide whether to prosecute anyone over cash for honours. He presented himself as a sea-green incorruptible who would never be swayed by political considerations.

At about the same time, at a private briefing for hacks in mid-November, he was asked about Saudi pressure to stop the Serious Fraud Office investigation into bribes and arms deals. "I am not commenting on any investigations. But I would not stop a prosecution on political grounds."

He maintained this position until just before last week's astonishing capitulation. As the *Telegraph* reported on 1 December: "Friends of Lord Goldsmith maintain that he still feels compromised by the way in which he was pressured in 2003 to change his advice to the Government about the legality of the Iraq war. He is said to be determined to ensure that on this issue no political pressure will be brought to bear upon him in deciding whether or not to bring prosecutions against any BAE Systems executives." A day later his spokesman told the *Grauniad*: "His general position is that he will not stop a prosecution for political reasons in any case."

So what happened? Simple: Blair, having been leant on by the Saudis, leant on his attorney-general. Despite his experience before the Iraq war, Goldsmith did his patron's bidding – thereby casually abolishing the traditional separation of the executive and the legal process.

EYE TOLD YOU SO

BACK in September the *Eye*'s In The City column predicted that political pressure to protect BAe Systems' £10bn Euro-fighter deal with Saudi Arabia could jeopardise the Serious Fraud Office investigation into BAe's dealings with the corrupt Saudi regime.

Eye 1166 warned of "pressure from a never keen Ministry of Defence, not to mention the Foreign Office, about the risk of embarrassing such a good customer by making allegations that Saudi princelings are corrupt… a BAe linked prosecution may not be exactly welcomed in Whitehall or Downing Street."

Attorney-general Lord Goldsmith's instruction to the SFO to bow to Saudi pressure and drop the case makes a mockery of Tony Blair's announcement in June of a clampdown on bribery by British companies abroad. SFO investigators were on course to access Swiss bank accounts which could have shown money passing to Saudi royals. The Saudis were alarmed at the precedent set by the Swiss in the case of James Giffen, bagman to Kazakhstan dictator Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has lucrative oil and gas contracts in his gift. Swiss authorities froze and handed over to US prosecutors details of $60m contained in local bank accounts linked to Nazarbayev and friends. Giffen's trial starts in February.

The SFO is still, in theory, examining suspect BAe contracts with South Africa, Chile, the Czech Republic, Romania and Tanzania. Huge commissions paid on South African contracts for £1.6bn worth of Hawk aircraft in 2001 went to figures close to President Mbeki and, possibly, to ANC party funds. But South Africa is another key British ally which the government is anxious not to upset. "National security" could well trump the dreary old "rule of law" once more.

● *Full story – In The City, page 28.*

NUMBER 10's discovery that the only space the Prime Minister had in his diary to be questioned by police coincided exactly with the publication of the report into Princess Diana's death was not the first time the government's misfortunes have mysteriously coincided with those of the royal family.

In February 2002, civil servants Martin Sixsmith and Jo Moore were both forced to resign from the Department of Transport after controversy over an alleged plan to "bury" the announcement of failures to meet rail targets on the day of Princess Margaret's funeral. As a relatively minor royal, Margaret was considered sufficient cover for such an innocuous announcement, whereas the police interrogation of the Prime Minister and the abandonment of a long-running fraud investigation after political pressure clearly needed a big hitter like Princess Di.

WELCOME back to Michael Cole, reinstalled at the right hand of Mohamed Fayed for last week's press conference and ready with his familiar catchphrase: "I think what Mohamed is trying to say…"

Cole departed Harrods in February 1998, following his boss's decision to by-pass his press spokesman and reveal his theory that Diana and Dodi had been murdered (as well as some last words of Princess Diana's which he had just made up) exclusively to Piers Morgan in the *Daily Mirror*. While Cole maintained publicly that "it has always been my intention to retire at the age of 55", he sorrowfully admitted to former colleagues that "he doesn't listen to me anymore".

Now, however, he is a fully paid-up subscriber to the Fayed world view again. The pompadoured PR man kicked off last Thursday's press conference with a rant about the leaking of Lord Stevens's findings before publication. Such leaks were "reprehensible", he declared.

Can this be the same Michael Cole who was sacked in disgrace from his job as BBC court correspondent in 1987 after leaking the contents of the Queen's Christmas message to *Daily Star* royal hack Andrew Morton?

JUST FANCY THAT!

"I believe he is a man of integrity and conscience." – Fayed on Stevens, 28 February 2006.

"As I have said many times, I have every confidence in Lord Stevens. He is a man of total integrity who is absolutely determined to discover the truth." – Fayed on Stevens, 2 June 2006.

"A tool for the establishment and the royal family and intelligence … He is himself a mental case." – Fayed on Stevens, 14 December 2006.

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ABC

STEVENS: NO CONSPIRACY

Street Of Shame

THE DILY EXPRESS

"SCANDAL OF DIANA COVER-UP" shrieked the ever-reliable *Daily Express* on 1 December.

"Exclusive: We expose Establishment Plot… A massive Establishment cover-up will mean the true findings of the investigation into the death of Princess Diana may never be known… Many of the key questions may not be answered by Lord Stevens' report. They include: Was the accident the result of a plot, hatched by the British Establishment or others? Was driver Henri Paul distracted by a bright flash of light as the Mercedes entered the Alma tunnel in Paris? What role, if any, did the mystery white Fiat Uno play in the crash? Why did it take so long for Diana to reach hospital after the crash? Why did pathologists break French law by embalming the Princess's body?"

Lord Stevens' 871-page "Report into the allegation of conspiracy to murder Diana, Princess of Wales" was published on 14 December. Chapter 7 was entitled "Blocking vehicles/ unidentified vehicles / bright flashes: the journey to the Alma underpass". Chapter 8 was called "Post-crash medical treatment of the Princess of Wales". And chapter 9 was entitled "The Embalming of the Body of the Princess of Wales at the Pitie-Salpetriere Hospital."

The *Express* headline the following morning? "DIANA: IT'S A WHITEWASH. £4m Stevens report does NOT answer the key questions", and furthermore "his report is a shoddy disgrace".

That's not what they said on 2 September: "So far, it [the Stevens inquiry] promises to be as thorough, wide-ranging and methodical as it should be … It is entirely possible that at the end of his endeavours, Lord Stevens's conclusions may not please everyone. But what everyone should be left with is the sense that everything that could be done was done."

Meanwhile the *Express* was keen to add yet another conspiracy to its vast repertoire.

It was "outrageous", the *Express* raged, that Lord Stevens's report should be published just before the inquest into Princess Diana's death is due to begin. "This manoeuvre by Scotland Yard is guaranteed to prejudice the deliberations of any jury. So what was presented yesterday amounted to a quite blatant exercise in jury-nobbling by the Establishment."

In their hysteria, both the *Express* and Fayed seem to have forgotten one rather crucial point. The Scotland Yard inquiry was commissioned by royal coroner Michael Burgess, when he opened and adjourned the inquest hearing in January 2004. The fact that Stevens produced his findings before rather than after the resumed inquest isn't so much a conspiracy as an obligation.

THE INDIPENDENT

THE *Independent* joined the tin-foil hat brigade on 15 December with an editorial which demonstrated that no-one at the paper had even bothered to listen to Lord Stevens' press conference, let alone flick through his report.

"It is very important that we do not allow our desire to avoid pejorative labels blunt [*sic*] our critical facilities," the paper intoned. "Scepticism can be a healthy instinct… a good deal remains unclear."

Er, what, exactly? "James Andanson, a French photographer who had been following Diana and Dodi all summer, was known to own a white Fiat Uno. It was sold and re-sprayed days after the accident." Except, as the 12 pages Stevens devoted to the vehicle show, it wasn't – it was sold for scrap in October 1997 because it had been rusting in a back garden in Lignieres for three years prior to the accident. It wasn't re-sprayed. And it was the wrong shade of white in the first place.

Ah, but "all of the closed-circuit television cameras monitoring the underpass – which might have supported his alibi – inexplicably failed to record the incident", continued the *Independent*. Well, quite explicable, actually – there was only one (the "10 CCTV cameras" often cited along the Mercedes' route are actually "on public and private buildings and only trained on the fronts of the buildings they protect") and it was maintained by the Compagnies de Circulation Urbaine de Paris to monitor rush-hour traffic congestion. Its staff knock off at 11pm, so as usual there was no one monitoring or recording it.

"We should beware the assumption that all the circumstances of this case have now been fully explained and all the loose ends neatly tied up," concluded the paper. If they ever are, it won't be thanks to the investigative skills of the *Independent*.

DILY MIRROR

"NO MURDER, no foul play, and no conspiracy" was the verdict the *Daily Mirror* delivered on Lord Stevens' findings four days before he got round to sharing them with the rest of the world.

"Dodi's father, Harrods boss Mohammed al-Fayed, has suggested Diana, 36, was killed to stop her marrying Dodi, a Muslim. He claims she was about to announce her engagement to Dodi and says his son had bought her a £230,000 engagement ring. However, friends of the playboy have told police he made no mention of marriage. And in one of her final conversations with best friend Rosa Monckton, Diana dismissed the idea."

So how did these outrageous rumours take hold? Well, it might have had something to do with the paper that printed an exclusive interview with Mohamed Fayed in February 1998 beneath the headline, "I had paid for the ring – Diana had said yes to Dodi – that night a butler had Champagne on ice: Princess Diana and Dodi were engaged", not to mention "It was no accident" and the equally fictional "Diana's last words" – the *Daily Mirror*.

NOT VERY OBSERVERANT

"U.S. BUGGED Diana's phone on night of death crash," announced the front page of the *Observer* five days before the Stevens inquiry was published. "Among extraordinary details due to emerge in the report by former Metropolitan police commissioner Lord Stevens is the revelation that the US security service was listening to her calls in the hours before she was killed in a car crash in Paris."

Could this extraordinary revelation, which was followed up around the world, be in any way related to the much-reported admission by the US National Security Agency back in December 1998 that it had amassed a 1,056-page dossier of information on the princess thanks to a phone tap on her friend Lucia Flecha de Lima, when she was the wife of the Brazilian ambassador in Washington? This hoary old tale was most recently disinterred by the *Daily Express* for the front-page splash "Spies bugged Diana's last calls" in February this year – not that this stopped the paper from following up the *Observer*'s version last Monday with their own revelation: "Bugging by US agents fuels Diana mystery".

Latest Latin-American Dance

Murderballs

"THE five women murdered in sleepy Suffolk were all prostitutes. But they can't be dismissed as tarts who asked for all they got." – Editorial in the ***Sun***, which apparently has such a low opinion of its readers that it thinks they need this admonishment.

"The most likely outcome is that he'll commit suicide, move from the area or get caught." – Top American serial-killer expert Professor Joseph Diaz, keeping all his options open in the ***Daily Telegraph***.

"We can only speculate about the insane compulsion that drives him… The question of what drives anyone to become a serial murderer remains as baffling as ever… It is quite impossible to say without more access to the evidence what drives the Ipswich murderer." – Crime author Colin Wilson, ***Daily Mail***, who nevertheless manages to speculate for 1,000 words.

"The killer seems to have embarked on a rampage." – Top psychologist Dr Glenn Wilson, giving the ***Sun*** more of the insight available only to experts.

"Gemma Adams has been described in the press as a 'loving daughter' from a good home… And yet the image that will stick in our minds has been shaped by the photograph used in all the newspapers: her police mug shot. Staring blankly at the camera, she looks, in many ways, like a stereotype of a hard-faced prostitute." – Julie Bindel in the ***Guardian***, somehow failing to notice that the photo in the ***Graunlad*** – and all other papers – actually showed Gemma Adams smiling.

"'We have got reassurance patrols out tonight, not just for the girls but also for the residents. They will be on duty throughout the night,' said Sgt Osman, whose older brother Russell played alongside Terry Butcher at the heart of the town's illustrious football team in the early 1980s." – BBC News online, going that extra mile to obey the rule "only connect".

"I can't believe the Iranians are doing this"

"IT HAS been the subject of furtive speculation for more than a quarter of a century," panted a breathless *Sunday Times* on 10 December. "Now a nude portrait said to be of Cherie Blair is published for the first time."

The nude woman depicted in the paper was not, however, the Prime Minister's future wife as depicted by artist Euan Uglow – and neither, despite the headline "As seen by the artist: the Prime Minister's wife", was the full-length version on display in the *Sunday Telegraph*. In both versions the young Ms Booth was strangely lacking in one anatomical attribute common to 24-year-old life models: pubic hair. It was present in abundance in the following day's *Daily Mirror* and Tuesday's *Guardian*, along with what an admiring Julia Langdon called "one pert nipple". She returned to Barbie-doll status in Monday's *Daily Mail*, which helpfully pointed out that the 54-year-old mother of four "was a lot slimmer then", but was fully hirsute on the paper's website, dailymail.co.uk, different grooming rules presumably applying in cyberspace. Oddest of all was Monday's *Times*, which printed the full mons-y in its first edition on 11 December but instituted an emergency waxing before the second and third went to print.

HOW did the *Daily Mail* react to news that it was way out ahead in the Information Commissioner's league table of publications that are "driving the illegal trade in confidential personal information"? Records from a single private detective agency in 2002 showed 1,387 paid transactions with journalists on the *Mail* and its sister titles, the *Mail on Sunday* and *Evening Standard*.

"In common with all newspapers and broadcasters, we use search agencies to obtain information entirely legitimately from a range of public sources," a spokesman for Associated Newspapers said. Fair enough. But what exactly does that have to do with the "details of mobile phone records, criminal records, bank statements and similar private information" with which the Information Commissioner concerns himself?

The 305 journalists – 58 of them from the *Mail* group – whose names turned up in Richard Thomas's investigation were seeking addresses, ex-directory phone numbers, health records, bank account details and the like. The *Mail* points out that the law allows enquiries in the public interest, but since Mr Thomas notes that some of the hacks on his list were trying to find out details of "the mother of someone who was on the *Big Brother* programme" and "the painter and decorator who parked his van outside a lottery winner's house", it seems unlikely that this applied in all 1,387 cases – particularly the 39 from the *Mail* group's glossy celeb supplements *Weekend* and *Night and Day*.

Oh well, the league table is just "a snapshot based on the activities of only one agency", sniffs the *Mail*. Quite so. An organisation as large as Associated Newspapers is hardly likely to employ just the one private detective, is it?

"THE most shocking part of Britain's frantic rush towards a fully fledged surveillance society is not so much the threat to personal liberty, although that is important; it is the lack of security," complained Henry Porter, returning to his award-winning theme in the *Observer* recently.

"For some time now, I have been warning about the menace that these systems may come to represent in the hands of future governments, the nature of which we cannot know. But having spent the last few months making a film about the growth of surveillance since 9/11, I realise that the threat exists in the present," he writes.

Indeed it does: you never know when someone could be listening in anymore. As the Information Commissioner Richard Thomas revealed last week, Porter's employer, the *Observer*, has been an enthusiastic participant in the "illegal trade in confidential personal information", purchasing data such as phone records from a private detective agency on at least 103 separate occasions.

A FEW months ago the *Guardian* reached an out-of-court settlement with Dilpazier Aslam, who joined the paper as a trainee hack in October 2004 but was sacked in July 2005 following the revelation that he belonged to the radical Islamist party Hizb ut-Tahrir – a fact he omitted to mention in his job application, or indeed in his *Grauniad* comment piece five days after the London bombings, tastefully headlined, "We rock the boat: today's Muslims aren't prepared to ignore injustice".

In a brief statement after the settlement with Aslam, who had launched an unfair dismissal case at an employment tribunal, the *Grauniad* announced: "No admission of liability was made, and the terms of the agreement will remain confidential."

Not any more. The *Eye* can reveal that Aslam received £30,000. Not a bad pay-off after just nine months as a trainee hack, but it was nearly far bigger. The paper originally offered £100,000, which Aslam refused. Then a bright *Grauniad* lawyer spotted a comparable tribunal settlement for £30,000. The offer was promptly reduced, and Aslam's lawyers advised him to take it.

"CITY bonuses feed the politics of envy," thundered a *Daily Mail* editorial last week.

Could this be sour grapes? *Mail* editor Paul Dacre collected a £200,000 bonus in 2004 but nothing last year – though his pay did rise from £885,000 to £997,000 by way of consolation. When the Daily Mail and General Trust (DMGT) publishes its annual report next month we shall learn whether his bonus has been restored.

The editorial also accused City bankers of letting down their shareholders. And who better than the *Mail* to deliver sermons on corporate responsibility? Earlier this year a leading investors' body, the Association of British Insurers, gave DMGT a "red top" rating, its most serious mark of displeasure.

The Association's main gripe was that one senior *Mail* executive had a rolling two-year contract, in flagrant contravention of City guidelines. Who was this naughty boy? Paul Dacre.

DAVID BLUNKETT's *Sun* column hit new heights of self-satire last week, as he mocked Iain Duncan Smith. Although "I always welcome a sinner who repenteth", he wondered why IDS took so long to discover what Blunkett has argued for years – that "stable families are the bedrock of society, the foundation on which a better life can be built for millions".

And how do you strengthen this bedrock? By impregnating other men's wives!

STAFF cutbacks at Express Newspapers have even hit the company Christmas card, which modestly lists all the charities that have been "helped" by benevolent chairman Richard Desmond.

Some are accidentally mentioned twice, including the "Al-Fayed Charitable Foundation". (Could this by any chance be related to the *Express*'s insistence on presenting Fayed's Diana conspiracy theories as fact?) The rest of the list is so full of typing errors and literals that charities may struggle to recognise themselves. They include: "Britsh Olympic Foundation", "Saegent Cancer Care for Children", "Multiple Solerosis Children's Appeal", "National Asthma Campain", "Peter Pan Nursery for childrens with special needs", "County Borough of Metuyr Tydfil Access Group", and, most embarrassingly of all, the "holocast educational trust".

If only he had run the list past one of his sub-editors to proof-read before sending it off to the printers. Oh, there aren't any: he's making them all redundant.

Looking unembarrassed on the front of the card is Rupert Bear, who was sold by Dirty Des to the intellectual property firm Entertainment Rights for £6m in October 2005. The deal gave the company control of worldwide rights to programming, licensing, merchandising, publishing, live events and new media. Desmond kept the right to publish old comic strips in some Express publications – but does this cover Rupert appearing on an error-strewn Christmas card, blowing the charity trumpet of the man who owns porn channel Television X? Only Algy Pug and Bill Badger can say.

"ALERT over fatal party drug", shrieked the *Evening Standard* over news that two London clubbers had been killed by the new drug "G", which police had described as "playing Russian roulette with your life – with very short odds".

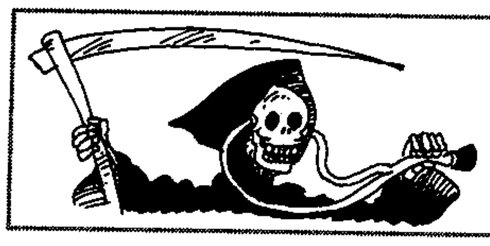
"The clear, liquid drug is popular on the gay clubbing scene," the paper reported. "It is a mixture of GHB and GBL, most commonly known as date rape drugs…
Gammabutyrolactone (GBL) is legal and readily available. It is sold online, where it is passed off as 'nail polish remover', 'liquid soap' or 'magical purifier'."

And indeed it is, as anyone typing the phrase into the *Evening Standard*'s website, thisislondon.co.uk, could swiftly find out. The paper offers two "sponsored links" offering [sic] "99% Gamma Butyrolactone: A+ customer service and fast shipping. Lowest price you will find & we will beat any competitors advertised price. We accept Visa/master paypal."

HOW the *Daily Mail* gloated over the story about Jim Pritchard, whose jilted girlfriend circulated an email detailing his infidelities! An unnamed former colleague told the paper: "He is a classic cad. He deserves his comeuppance as a lothario."

In a summary of his career, the *Mail* noted that Pritchard first came to London as a parliamentary reporter, then became a press officer at West-minster Council before joining National Car Parks as a PR executive. Oddly, however, it omitted one detail from Pritchard's CV: until two years ago the classic cad was a hack on… the *Mail on Sunday*.

"So much for Sat Nav"



HEALTH SPECIAL

NICE BALLS

IT'S NOT often that a frontbench MP admits that rationing in the NHS exists, and has to exist, so hats off to shadow health secretaries Andrew Lansley (Con) and Steve Webb (Lib Dem). Admittedly M.D. put the words in their mouths, but they repeated them without much prompting.

The occasion was the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) conference, which MD was paid to chair (though an assessment of his value for money is pending). Representing new Labour was GP/MP Howard Stoate, who wouldn't admit to rationing but made up for it by declaring that the government's reform program was too quick and in the wrong order. Alas, he's unlikely to become health secretary.

NICE exists to try to make the rationing of healthcare rational. After lengthy analysis of the evidence, it approves most treatments but gets a good media kicking for taking its time to reach a judgement (Herceptin) or deciding which treatments shouldn't be funded by the NHS (Alzheimer's drugs for some patients, Velcade for myeloma).

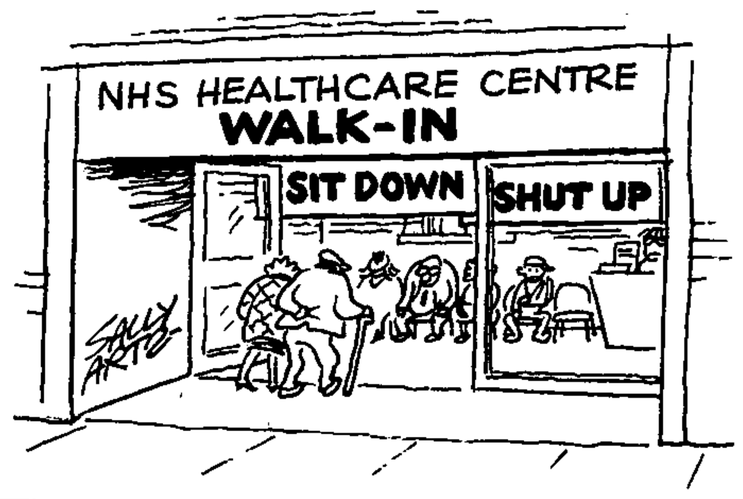
The result is a covert system of co-payments, where the rich top up their NHS treatment with private prescriptions for non-NICE-approved drugs. This, according to Professor Karol Sikora, is happening throughout the NHS. So what's to stop cancer specialists offering private patients expensive new drugs that only add a few months to life? Their conscience, apparently.

Alas, "new" Labour's health reforms are not evaluated with the same rigour as new treatments. If Patsy Hewitt really wants to convince the public about NHS reconfiguration, she needs to publish detailed service planning and a rationale which can be supported by evidence. But all she has is ideology. Crippling hospitals with PFI debts and throwing money at independent sector treatment centres to cherry-pick easy operations has no evidence base, other than the splintered, debt-ridden service it has spawned. And with Patsy staking her career on balancing the books, it's impossible to distinguish between service closures for safety or financial reasons.

The most compelling evidence that the health reforms have failed is that, under Blair, the gap between rich and poor has widened. The UK has one of the most unequal societies in Europe and every one of Labour's solutions has inadvertently made it worse. Waiting list initiatives and patient choice programs favour the well-educated, who are also more likely to read and act on NICE guidelines. This isn't all Labour's fault: there's an inherent bias amongst NHS staff, especially doctors, to favour patients who are more like ourselves.

In contrast, poorer patients are less likely to access good preventative care and routine surgery, and hence are more reliant on the very emergency services which Labour is closing. The provision of healthcare has always been poor where the need is greatest, and excluding the obese and smokers from treatment, as is happening in some areas, will widen the gap further. Poorer patients often have more than one illness and the window of opportunity for treatment is narrow. If Labour was really concerned about equality it would prioritise treatment on the basis of postcode, so that the poor got treated more quickly than the rich. And it would reinstate a properly funded public health specialty to evaluate its reforms and take on the *Daily Mail*. As Professor Rod Griffiths told the conference: "The poor aren't 'hard to reach'. The tobacco industry and drug pushers have no problem reaching them. It's just that the politicians and the NHS don't want to." Happy New Year.

M.D.



Unstable foundations

MORE evidence that Blair's foundation hospitals are undermining Brown's PFI comes from the Bradford Teaching Hospitals, which have used their new-found independence from the Department of Health, gained through foundation status, to abandon plans for a £116m PFI.

Instead the trust has opted for a more modest £70m of conventional work. The foundation's chairman, David Richardson, told *Contract Journal* that "as a foundation trust we have freedom and flexibility and we will not saddle the people who come after us with a massive millstone of debt around their necks". The government obviously thinks highly of Richardson – he was invited to meet Tony Blair and Patricia Hewitt at Number 10 in June, mixing with business leaders and other trust heads – even if he thinks the PFI is a "massive millstone".

Alan Milburn first announced the PFI to improve the Bradford Royal Infirmary and St Lukes Hospital in 2001, describing it as part of a "long-term investment to build a 21st century NHS". By 2003, the scheme had failed to take off so the Department of Health squeezed it into a programme called the "northern batch", nicknamed the "northern botch" because it fell apart in twelve months. The government felt the Bradford scheme was not attracting enough attention because contractors were just not interested in piddly little £100m jobs. So they "batched" it with other PFIs in Manchester and elsewhere to make a massive £500m super deal, attracting bidders such as Balfour Beatty and Bovis. However, when local health authorities realised they were being batched up like Turkeys for Christmas – with all the benefits going to the contractors and a miserable deal for the hospitals – the Department of Health's business-friendly scheme fell apart. Manchester pulled out, and Bradford was left to ponder a PFI on its own again.

Now Bradford has had a few more years to think, it has finally abandoned the PFI. Instead, local firms will carry out work in smaller contracts. The big PFI firms are starting to worry, because Blair believes all hospitals should be foundations by 2010, which could mean a lot more proposed PFI millstones being cast aside.

A&E 'accident'

PLANS to close the Accident and Emergency department at the Royal Surrey Hospital in Guildford may need another look after patients noticed something fishy.

Suspicions were raised after the hospital's Friends group heard of more than 100 cases in which local patients picked up by ambulances were carted off to the more distant Frimley Hospital – including one man who was within sight of the Royal Surrey.

When local MP Jeremy Hunt contacted the South East Coast NHS Trust with the Friends' findings, he was told that the anomaly was down to, er, a "computer glitch" in the system telling drivers where to go. The Trust promised to "review historic data to identify when this error started and identify the root cause", and to "commence a review of the criteria used to nominate destination hospitals".

Mr Hunt described the computer error as "highly suspicious". The huge campaign to save the Royal Surrey was among those highlighted after New Labour's pals at the Institute for Public Policy Research claimed that those trying to save A&E units from closure could cost 1,000 unnecessary deaths a year. Research by the Save the Royal Surrey campaigners reveals that Guildford residents would face a 20 minute wait for an ambulance under the planned arrangements, while now they only have to wait five minutes. Those in outlying villages would have to wait even longer.

The campaigners have long argued that it makes little sense to shut one of the country's top performing A&Es and a hospital that breaks even financially. With the discovery that ambulances have been diverted away, the figures on which closure plans have been based could now turn out to be very, very flawed indeed.

O·B·N

Twice a year Gordon Brown fills his party's sails with pride. His tornado of facts and figures magics up images of untold national wealth and success.

Standing at the dispatch box, the towering superiority of his brain makes intellectual pygmies of his opponents.

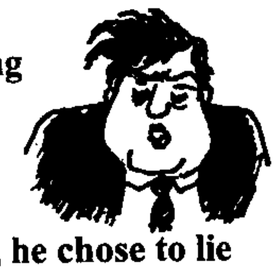
POLLY TOYNBEE
The Guardian

Submitted by Mark Jenkins

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOLLEY
JAN. TRANSFER WINDOW LOOMS...
HEY, HAVE YOU SEEN THE LATEST?...
LAMPARD, GERRARD, COLE, ROONEY... UP FOR SALE!
REALLY?...
I'M NOT SURPRISED, DO YOU WANT TO ADD THIS TO THE LISTINGS, IT'S RUBBISH!
ebay.co.uk
FOOTBALL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES
TOTALLY FRANK: FRANK LAMPARD
MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY STEVEN GERRARD
MY DEFENCE: COLE
RIO MY STORY

PRE-BUDGET SPECIAL



GORDON BROWN has spent years studiously avoiding questions on his pet Private Finance Initiative. And when he was eventually forced to answer one after his pre-budget speech two weeks ago, he chose to lie his way out.

Brown had boasted of sticking to his tough fiscal rules, predicting that he'll stay within his "sustainable investment rule" that debt stays below 40 percent of national income. He invited critics to contrast that with levels of borrowing in the US and Europe of 47 percent and 65 percent.

What these figures in fact show is that there was never any need for a 40 percent limit. All it has achieved is to inflict the devastating PFI on public services. In order to stay within an arbitrary limit with no economic merit, Brown has invested through the ruinously expensive PFI, keeping liabilities "off balance sheet" and thus out of debt figures. A recent Office of National Statistics report showed that by last March around £25bn was being kept off the books this way; if it and later deals were included, the 40 percent rule would be broken next year.

When Tory MP Michael Fallon challenged the Chancellor's record by pointing out the huge PFI debts he was ignoring, Gordon resorted to a porky: "We operate exactly the same rules and procedures that operated under the previous Conservative government in this respect." Brown knows this isn't the case as he was the Chancellor who in 1997, helped by his Paymaster General Geoffrey Robinson, set up the Treasury PFI Taskforce to boost the scheme that the Tories had invented. One of the key steps was to re-write accounting guidelines, culminating in a 1999 note from the Treasury, "How to account for PFI transactions". The result was extremely flexible rules that have allowed every PFI hospital built since to stay off the government's books. By contrast, ONS figures show that most of the relatively few PFI schemes signed under the Tories went "on balance sheet".

But that was back in the days when, as shadow chancellor, Brown called PFI "a cynical distortion of public finance". Perhaps that's why he likes it so much.

THE government's so-called "efficiency" programme rolled on with a further 5 percent annual budget cuts for Whitehall departments, meaning tens of thousands more job cuts on top of the 84,000 announced two and a half years ago.

Under the uniquely New Labour way of monitoring the efficiency programme, cuts are recorded but extra spending that might fill the gaps is quietly ignored. A favourite trick is to employ consultants to do civil servants' jobs at many times the cost, a scam that has led Lib Dem shadow chancellor Vincent Cable to ask all departments how many consultants they employ. Only the Department for Constitutional Affairs is able to tell him. It has appointed 603 consultants in the past five years, though it couldn't say how long each stayed.

The Treasury replied tersely: "The information requested is not available." It was, however, separately forced to disclose that it spent £21.4m on consultants in the past five years, while its agencies, including HMRC, splashed £431m on them in a similar period. Hours of trawling through government efficiency announcements unearthed no evidence of plans to limit, never mind cut, these costs.

CALLED TO ORDURE

ONE of Westminster's soapier committees is scrutinising one of the more nebulous innovations in our schools: the teaching of "Citizenship". Civil servants are rumoured to wish David Blunkett had never introduced it when he was education secretary. But will the committee notice?

The long-running inquiry is being held by the Commons education committee, chaired by infamous windbag Barry Sheerman (Lab, Huddersfield). Barry the Bore lets witnesses drone away for ages but is far more strict with the MPs who are asking questions. Er, shouldn't it be the other way round?

Citizenship, which formalises respect for government systems (Oh no! – Ed.), was foisted on the education system by Sir Bernard Crick, a left-wing political theorist and departmental adviser who taught Blunkett at university. When Crick (who lists "polemicising" as a recreation) appeared before the committee last year it turned out there was another cosy link: he taught the young Barry Sheerman, too. Crick groaned that he was "trying to forget" this. Sheerman can have this effect on people.

Crick expressed "amazement" that Tony Blair and other ministers, having stuck Citizenship on the curriculum, seemed to be losing faith in it. "You cannot change attitudes overnight," said Crick, thus confirming that Citizenship is not just a matter of teaching pupils facts but aims to mould their opinions about racism, minorities, volunteering, etc.

At present there are some 850 specialist Citizenship teachers – but no fewer than 23,000 schools. When education minister Lord Adonis appeared in front of Sheerman's fearless warriors recently he admitted that only 220 new Citizenship teachers are being trained per year.

Adonis was asked when Whitehall's education working party on Citizenship had last met. Adonis: "Dunno." No minister sat on it, he admitted. Paul Holmes (Lib Dem, Chesterfield) noted that a similar ministerial working party had "folded" last year. Holmes also asked the classic question: "Should we make volunteering in schools compulsory?"

Adonis said that "there is a big debate in the Citizenship community and within schools about how far Citizenship should be a discrete subject, and what is the overlap with, say, geography and history". This was probably Sir Humphrey-speak for: "We realise there's no space for this in the curriculum as a separate subject, it's an expensive, politically correct gimmick, we haven't got enough teachers, so we're going to merge it into more traditional subjects and hope nobody notices."

At another meeting the committee heard from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham and the head of the Muslim Council of Great Britain. The Muslim had such a thick Bangladeshi accent he was incomprehensible. The MPs were too polite to suggest that time spent on Citizenship lessons might more usefully be spent by some pupils on learning English.

The Archbishop, meanwhile, attended by a plump chaplain called Father Joe who took notes in copperplate ink handwriting, started the session by indicating that Citizenship was a good thing. He soon seemed to change tack when he was reminded that it included teaching equal rights for gay people. Among the spectators at this meeting was an observer apparently from the Citizenship Foundation who fell fast asleep within five minutes.

Another pro-Citizenship witness, teacher Keith Ajegbo, has told the committee of great benefits from the subject. He said Citizenship reduced the number of fights on school premises because pupils had a better understanding of their rights. "So speaks a highly experienced professional," said Sheerman, nodding sagely and asserting that "the quality of all we have heard has been inspirational".

No doubt his committee's report, expected in the new year, will be equally gushing towards the brainchild of his former professor.

'Gavel Basher'

AT HIS "business advisory summit" last month, the Chancellor was proud to announce a "modern relationship between business and HM Revenue and Customs... one that gives companies greater tax certainty, quicker decisions and fewer investigations".

The Chancellor was unveiling a "review of links with large business" by HMRC chairman and captain of industry Sir David Varney, with a little help from six companies. A closer look at these select firms, however, suggests that a few more investigations of large companies might help Brown shore up his finances.

Cadbury, whose chairman Sir John Sunderland is president of the CBI, is currently going through the courts in an effort to shift profits into a tax haven to avoid paying its fair share. And very effective it is too: in the past two years the company's tax bill on worldwide profits of £1.5bn has been 19 percent, with just £3m paid to the British Exchequer.

Others invited to shape the tax system were: HSBC (tax worldwide of 24.5 percent and still threatening to leave the country over high taxes); Unilever (24.4 percent); AstraZeneca (27 percent and exposed in the US for tax avoidance); Tomkins (21.2 percent with just £1m paid in the UK); and Cable and Wireless (17.4 percent and not a penny paid to the British Treasury).

CON-SULTANCY NEWS

FORMER cabinet secretary Lord (Richard) Wilson took up his obligatory directorship with a consultancy firm, in his case Xansa plc, soon after he left government at the end of 2002, and is now proving a worthwhile investment for the firm.

Wilson, who was Sir Humphrey from 1998, was widely believed to be behind government foot-dragging over the Freedom of Information laws they had long promised but only introduced in 2005 (and are now set to all but repeal – see recent *Eyes*). Shortly before he left Whitehall, and soon after the government published the consultation paper that launched its identity card plans, Wilson received the accolade of Worst Public Servant 2002 in Privacy International's "Big Brother" awards for his "long-standing commitment to opposing freedom of information, data protection and ministerial accountability".

This experience will no doubt prove invaluable to his new employer Xansa as it takes on a two-year ID card "project and programme management support" contract, with the possibility of a further two years, with the Home Office. By happy coincidence Wilson used to be the top civil servant there too, from 1994 to 1998.

Another lucky ID contract winner is KPMG. Fresh from endorsing the government's dubious methods of calculating the costs, the firm has been rewarded with an 11-week "organisational development" contract.

QUESTION OF HEALTH

IT'S NOT just the *Eye's* questions on the £12.4bn NHS National Programme for IT that the Department of Health treats with contempt (see last *Eye*). Ministers seem to consider the scheme above parliamentary scrutiny too.

Asked by Tory MP John Hayes for an analysis of spending on the three-year-old programme so far, health minister Rosie Winterton listed payments to the big IT contractors totalling £918m so far, and ignored the enormous costs of running the programme. These had reached £580m by last March, and spelling out what today's even greater total was spent on (thought to include armies of consultants, lawyers and PR firms) could prove embarrassing given the abysmal return so far.

What did emerge was just how badly two of the big contractors are performing. The firm responsible for implementing systems in trusts across London, BT, has received just £2.7m on its £1bn contract, only £1.4m of that in the past seven months, despite repeated assurances to the stock market that all is well on the deal. Fujitsu, responsible for the South of England, isn't doing much better. It has earned £27m on its £1bn deal, only half a million pounds of which has come in since April. The reason is simple: contractors are paid only when they deliver, and on these crucial parts of the programme they haven't done so.

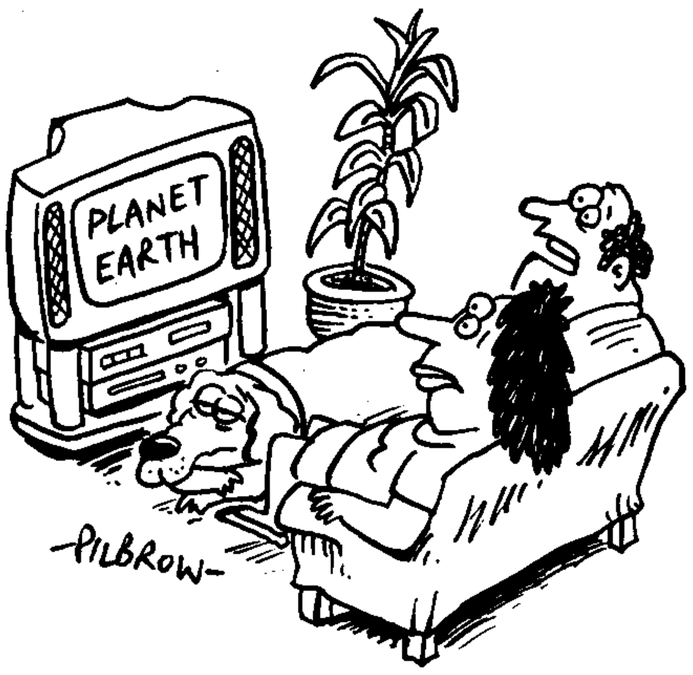
Fujitsu's troubles have been compounded by problems with the few systems it has installed, notably at the Nuffield in Oxford, where IT failures led to cancelled operations. The company can take consolation, however, from the contract it began this month to run the NHS Connecting for Health helpdesk, enabling the company – for a suitable fee – to advise users tearing their hair out over its own systems!

ARCHER SICK OF HIM?

CONGRATULATIONS to Lord Jeffrey Archer, who continues his rehabilitation in the new year with a starring role in *The Verdict*, BBC2's "hugely ambitious television event" which will attempt to "bring the law to life in a completely new way".

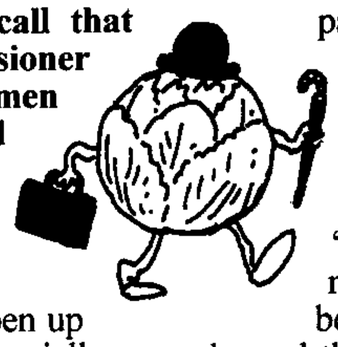
Archer will sit on a jury alongside such luminaries as *Brookside's* Jennifer Ellison, Anne Summers boss Jacqueline Gold and Ingrid Tarrant as they consider the fictional case of a celebrity footballer accused of rape, aided by genuine and "highly respected" members of the legal profession acting as judge and counsels for the prosecution and defence.

"A huge effort was taken by everyone involved in the production to ensure that the jury experience was as authentic as possible," announced producer Stephen Lambert. So episode one will presumably cover Jeff filling out his summons form, admitting that yes, he has "in the last ten years, served any part of a sentence of imprisonment" – four years for perjury, no less – and being regretfully informed that this makes him one of the very few people in the country ineligible to sit on a jury.



"It takes 5 years to film–I doubt they've enough time left to make a sequel"

BRUSSELS SPROUTS



READERS of *Private Eye* may recall that Roger Liddle, assistant to EU commissioner Peter Mandelson, denied that businessmen in the European Services Forum had special access to EU trade negotiators.

The ESF, representing companies such as Barclays, Standard Chartered Bank, Accenture and Pricewaterhouse-Coopers, want EU trade negotiators to open up developing world markets – especially privatisation plans – to their "services".

Last June, Private Eye disclosed that EU Trade negotiators from the influential "133 Committee" were visiting Britain, where the DTI was taking them to "one of several" London pubs, with a spin on the London Eye and a long meeting with the ESF thrown in. Liddle told Radio 4: "This idea that the European Services Forum has privileged access to the 133 Committee in my view is nonsense! End of story. Nonsense."

However, *Private Eye* has received yet more documents showing the ESF does indeed have special access to the 133 Committee. This time Mandelson's EU Trade Secretariat invited the negotiators to a meeting and Christmas cocktail party with ESF. The Corporate European Observatory, a group campaigning against big business lobbying in the EU, was leaked documents showing that Mandelson's staff sent trade negotiators a letter inviting them to an "informal meeting between ESF and members of the… 133 Committee" at the beginning of December. The agenda showed that the hour-long meeting on trade talks and "services" was followed by a two-hour cocktail party.

Mandelson takes the services lobby very seriously. After international trade talks broke down last year because developing countries demanded less liberalisation in services and less trade treaty provision for privatisation of their utilities and public services, the EU has found a new way to revive this agenda. Mandelson is pressuring the poorest African countries to sign individual Economic Partnership Agreements with the EU, establishing trade and services "liberalisation" on a country by country basis. Poorer nations fear they will lose EU aid or debt relief if they do not sign.

IMMIGRATION SPECIAL

AS THE British immigration service continues forcibly to deport the most innocent-looking people, why exactly are the Cheeky Girls still here?

Romanian twins Gabriella and Monica Irimia have been in the UK since 2001 and, as internal Home Office documents seen by the *Eye* explain, "made a name for themselves on the popular music scene" after appearing on *Pop-stars: The Rivals*. Their mother is married to a British citizen, but as they are adults they had to apply for their own right to remain under European Community Association Agreements.

In August this year they were refused "further leave to remain" as self-employed entertainers after failing to provide the necessary financial information. Those applying to extend their ECAA leave must show immigration services their bank accounts and tax returns in order to demonstrate that they can maintain themselves. The Home Office memo observes that in 2005 "there were press reports that they owed significant sums of money", although it does note that they are still working, including "performing at Pontins holiday camps".

This August it was reported that the pair faced action in the Royal Courts of Justice over an unpaid £4,500 tax bill.

Still, the Home Office knows what it should really worry about, with the internal memo noting that the case has media implications: "It is likely that the Cheeky Girls may themselves involve the tabloid press to draw attention to their situation and obtain some free publicity." Can't have that, of course, and the *Eye* understands that the notices of refusal have still not actually been served.

With Romania scheduled to join the EU on 1 January 2007, it will soon be too late to remove them and the UK may well be stuck with the Irimia sisters.

Now that *is* Cheeky.

Legal News

AS THE senior libel judge, Mr Justice Eady will be familiar with the law that allows the media (and anyone else) to publish honest criticism even though it might be libelous.

He is probably not so familiar with being the subject of such criticism, particularly the kind that has greeted his recent decision to stop the identity of a "celebrity adulterer" being revealed in the press by the cuckolded husband.

Of course the media always reacts in this way to anything that might threaten it, but on this occasion everyone seems to agree that the judicial distaste for tabloid journalism has gone too far. And it is not only the press that has had Eady in its sights. In October the law lord Lord Hoffman described Eady's approach to the so-called Reynolds "public interest" libel defence as "quite unrealistic", and upheld an appeal by the *Wall Street Journal*. And only three weeks ago the Court of Appeal ruled that Eady had "gone wrong in principle or seriously misdirected himself" when he threw out a libel claim because the claimant had delayed in coming up with some money as "security for costs".

So has the press got Eady on the run over his "anti-media" rulings (one even went so far as to say he was on the verge of being sacked)? Not yet. He was due to have a "kiss and make up" lunch with Hoffman, and last Thursday another Court of Appeal went out of its way to praise Eady's handling of a case brought by Loreena McKennitt, a supposedly well-known folk singer, to stop a book making confidential revelations about her being published – a case which may have even more serious implications for press freedom.

WHILE the government plans to slash the Legal Aid budget yet again (a move it calls "reform") magistrates are getting their knickers in a twist over, er, tiny badges worn by lawyers.

Many solicitors are wearing lapel badges supporting the Law Society's "What Price Justice?" campaign. The Law Society says cuts to the already struggling Legal Aid system will result in hundreds of practitioners giving up such work or going out of business, leaving vulnerable people without legal representation.

Magistrates in Staffordshire were the first to throw a wobbler over the badges, instructing several solicitors, including one who was sitting in the public gallery at the time, to remove them as they were "inappropriate". Instructions to forbid the badges were then issued to court clerks across the county. Things were less co-ordinated in Colchester, where one panel of magistrates refused to sit in court until the badges were removed, while in the next room a district judge heard his case addressed by lawyers wearing the pins.

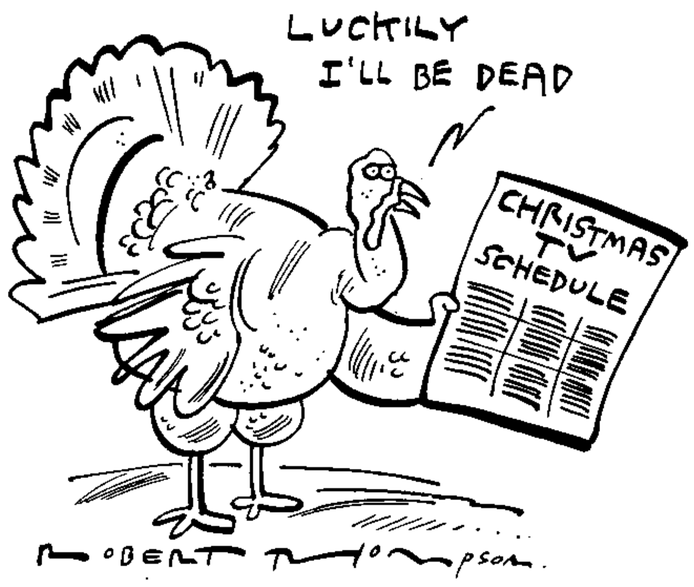
Meanwhile in Canterbury, magistrates got completely carried away and demanded that solicitor David Nelson also remove the Charlton Athletic supporters badge he has worn in court for the past 10 years.

ITV

I'm The Chairman, Get Me Out Of Here (BBC/ITV)

THE spectacle of the BBC chairman's annual Christmas drinks party for the great and good hastily being turned into a leaving do is appropriate to a nervous, edgy year in television, in which futures have been permanently uncertain and hasty second thoughts have quickly followed long-considered first ones. Let's, in this page's seasonal tradition, give them their cards.

The BBC would have expected to end December with both a new licence fee and a new BBC Trust under Michael Grade in place, so it is quite an achievement to have ended up with neither. The two failures are probably linked.



While Grade was clearly attracted by the ITV moolah and the chance to decide again what time people get to see Ant & Dec or Melvyn, he's also a sharp enough politician to have seen that the threats from Westminster of a licence-fee settlement well below demands (resulting from a combination of post-Hutton revenge and the transition from Blairism to Brownite rigour) will probably leave the corporation's management presiding over massive jobs and budget cuts in the next two years. As a guy who likes to be liked – and had publicly promised to remove repeats from the schedules – Grade didn't want to be around for that.

The programme-makers he leaves behind have also clearly got problems. *The Innocence Project*, BBC1's lawyer drama, may not have been much cop. But by pulling it from the schedules after three episodes because of low-ish audiences (2.6 million), BBC1 boss Peter Fincham appeared to signal that ratings will be the measure of success on the main channel: a surely risky signal to send with the licence fee still being decided. And if overnights now decide a BBC1 show's future, where does that leave *Question Time* or *Panorama* – which returns to BBC1 peak-time next year – which will clearly struggle to do as well as *The Innocence Project*?

The main problem for ITV is that while snatching Grade is a publicity coup, it's also a cry for help. As when Steve McClaren became the England football coach, the appointment of a 63-year-old semi-retired from television is an acknowledgement of a small field of applicants.

Grade's difficulty is that he's an expert scheduler with a liking for high-class drama and documentary. But the question of where you run your "bankers" against the BBC's counts for almost nothing in a world of Sky Plus and shows being downloaded to mobies and iPods.

And, on past form at the BBC and Channel 4, a classic Grade commission would be a two-hour *South Bank Show* special with Sir Simon Rattle cannily combined with a big American import. But times have changed and advertisers and multi-channel homes would flee from Rattle-Bragg, while the modern equivalents of *Dallas*, *Dynasty* and *Friends* never get near ITV, being bought by Sky or Four.

That leaves Grade with Ant & Dec as his secret weapons but his desperate predecessors have surely already used the cheeky duo in every possible way. And even their flagship, *I'm A Celebrity*, was showing dangerous signs of rot this time round, with a largely boring cast and desperate innovations such as splitting the camp in half. The fact that ITV has two hours of *Soapstar Superstar* – an extended *Celebrity Stars in Their Eyes* – in peaktime on the first Friday of January may give Grade sleepless nights.

Channel 4 is doing okay with ratings and advertisers but the buoyancy disguises an identity crisis. The increasing vulgarising of *Big Brother* has brought over the ITV1 audience, but it makes a peculiar brand-leader for a channel still with a remit to be outside the mainstream. The decision to have the Christmas message read by a Muslim in a niqab also feels like stunt scheduling. They're still getting the classy American dramas – with *Ugly Betty* due to start in the new year -- but the pisspoor performance of *Russell Brand* (down to 400,0000 on Friday nights) suggests a serious gap between what the commissioners and the viewers regard as cool.

In the multi-channel world, the main story has been the difficulty of making an impact. For all the millions spent on acquisitions and advertising, Sky's ratings remain static, with the cricket and football franchises giving low returns for huge expenditure. And, on the other minnows, shows that make a big publicity impact – for instance, BBC4's *Fear of Fanny* or UKTV's *I Was Churchill's Bodyguard* – are still rewarded less with audiences than by promotion to a mainstream channel: both are centrepieces of the BBC2 Christmas schedule this year.

Perhaps that's another reason why Michael "No More Repeats" Grade had to get out.

'Remote Controller'

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Where is the Mona Lisa hung?

Contestant: The British Museum.

Robinson: What "I" is a country in southern Europe?

Contestant: India.

Robinson: What national newspaper is nicknamed "the Torygraph"?

Contestant: The Times.

Robinson: Which "D" normally refers to the male parent?

Contestant: Mum.

Robinson: Watling Street, which now forms part of the A5, was built by which ancient civilisation?

Contestant: Apes.

AD NAUSEAM

ROYAL MAIL'S slogan for its current special delivery campaign is, "Late is as good as never". It's backed up by a spoof online petition at stoplateness.com using the services of a fictitious German "punctuality expert" called Dr Eva Gudorson.

All very amusing, particularly to the millions of Royal customers – 5.5 percent according to the Royal Mail's own figures – who will receive their Christmas mail and gifts late this year. They might wish to quote Royal Mail's own dictum – that late is as good as never – when they ask it to refund postage costs on late deliveries.

P.S. In September, FedEx Express ran a campaign in the States using the exact same tagline. It would appear that in advertising "Late" is perfectly fine, so long as no one notices that you've stolen the slogan from across the Atlantic.

THE two mobile phone operators O_2 and 3 are currently locked in a tortuous tussle about bubbles. Specifically, the bubbles that O_2 has had floating around the globe as part of its advertising campaign for the past few years.

In 2004, 3 ran an ad using bubbles to compare its Pay-As-You-Go prices with O_2's. O_2 took the case to the High Court, saying the ads infringed its trademarks. But the court ruled earlier this year that 3's actions were acceptable under the Comparative Advertising Directive, which says there will be times when there is no way to identify a competitor other than by making reference to one of its trademarks.

Now, in the latest riveting development, the case is going to the European Court of Justice. Giles Crown, a partner at 3's lawyers Lewis Silkin, said: "This judgment will be of great importance and interest to advertisers across Europe." He then added that the judgment will take "a few years". By which time, O_2's bubbles campaign will be long forgotten and all that will be left is a load of hot air.

IT'S A very Happy Christmas indeed at agency WCRS, which recently landed the £75m BSkyB account after a two-way shootout with WPP-owned Grey.

It had been assumed that Grey would be a shoo-in, as WPP head honcho Martin Sorrell has built a close relationship with James Murdoch. What on earth could have gone wrong? Perhaps it was the rather untimely admission from Grey's CEO Tamara Ingram, who was running the pitch, that she had never pressed the red interactive button on her set at home. Note to Tamara – potential clients tend to like agencies who show a full understanding of their business.

"It's the last time Richard Hammond test-drives the sleigh!"

MEDIA NEWS

HAS BBC director-general Mark Thompson joined the Christmas-deniers?

The D-G's latest email round-robin to all BBC staff shies away from wishing the corporation's toilers a Merry Christmas.

Instead, after telling them "we all need to be patient" over the hoped-for licence fee increase and expressing a wish that "a final decision" on the move to Salford will be taken soon in 2007, Thompson's seasonal greeting ends by wishing staff "a happy and peaceful New Year".

Mustn't say anything controversial, must we?

TESSA JOWELL's backing for an above-inflation rise in the licence fee has miraculously vanished.

Blair's departure has focused minds on political futures and Jowell is now said to support Gordon Brown's view that the BBC should cut its operating costs by 3 percent a year.

As predicted in the *Eye*, stand by for more repeats and a series of strikes next year.

EDDIE MCGUIRE, the Aussie rules football club chairman and TV quizmaster who was promoted this year to run the late Kerry Packer's Australian television station Channel 9, has added a new euphemism to the English language. Soon after his appointment, he suggested that the channel's star female breakfast TV presenter, Jessica Rowe, was a liability and that management should "bone" her.

She was duly sacked, which is what he really meant. But even more innovative was the choice of her successor – a lingerie model called Sarah, with no qualifications, save that she is married to the Little Digger himself, Lachlan Murdoch, which should protect her from any nasty embonements.

***PANORAMA* hacks are in despair at the move to a Monday night prime-time slot, even some of those who have campaigned vigorously for a move from the present Sunday night graveyard.**

The problem is that it will shrink to 30 minutes and be presenter-led by Jeremy Vine. Accusations that the programme will dumb down are rife at White City. Its best investigative reporter, John Ware, has decided to quit and others are considering the same move. Channel 4 News executives are offering tempting packages for *Panorama* stalwarts.

THE BBC's obsession with "interactivity" may have peaked at last with the realisation that while viewers and listeners enjoy posting messages, they are bored rigid when other people's missives are endlessly read back to them.

The problem worsens when the posts are obsessed with lunatic conspiracies - Mossad blowing up the World Trade Centre, Diana's murder, alien abductions, etc.

The *Today* programme on Radio 4 has "relaunched" its website to include only those threads started by its own hacks, not by the users of the site.

***SKY NEWS* hacks covering the Farepak scandal looked no further than their BBC News 24 colleagues for the inspiration behind their own live interview.**

The BBC interviewed Suzy Hall, a protester, and HBOS banker Shane O'Riordain just before five-thirty as the Sky people watched just off camera. Ten minutes later and hey presto, the same two guests appeared on *Sky News* answering the same questions.

Tragically, Sky then featured an advert for the Halifax and Bank of Scotland in the following commercial break.

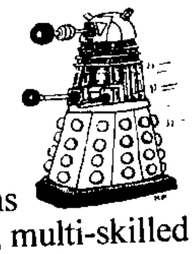
"INCREASINGLY, businesses want to be seen as family-friendly. But how do you tell a company that's really committed to making life easier for parents from one that just wants in on the hype?" asks bbc.co.uk/parenting, the BBC's advice website.

One big clue might be if the company is shutting down all of its nurseries for staff childcare, like, er, the BBC. The Beeb has told staff that it is to close all six of the corporation's in-house nurseries, childcare for 217 of its staff, to save £1m a year.

MUCH discussion has been going on at the BBC about who is to give the 2007 Reith Lectures following the mixed reviews received by Daniel Barenboim last year. It seems the choice has now settled on Professor Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University in New York, and probably the world's most influential economist.

But until recently the suits at the BBC were seriously considering another candidate, a prominent public figure who will have left office by the time the lectures are delivered. Who he? Step forward, the Rt Hon Tony Blair!

BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"Based in the *Blue Peter* production office, the BP Interactive team is key to our aim of establishing BP at the leading edge of delivering multi-media formats. We will pioneer the use of new and emerging platforms and the development of an integrated, multi-skilled production team to deepen the unique dialogue we have with our audience not only through the content of our output but through the means of delivery… You will ensure that the origination of all content for *Blue Peter* allows for it to be used on new and emerging platforms and pilot exclusive content ideas online that can be re-purposed as ideas to feature in linear broadcasts..."

– Job advert for assistant producer, 'Blue Peter'

Each fortnight The Cartoon Museum at 35 Little Russell Street is featuring a bubble competition as part of the *'Private Eye at 45'* cartoon exhibition.

This issue's winner is **Jack Dix** from London N2.

OBN

Rupert Murdoch, News Corporation

At the risk of finding ourselves in Private Eye, we think Rupert Murdoch, chairman of News Corporation, ultimate owner of The Sunday Times, deserves consideration this year.

Quite apart from enjoying record profits from movies such as Ice Age: The Meltdown and the Fox television interests, the media group reaped the benefit of its 2005 purchase of My Space, the networking website. My Space continued to grow explosively, and now has more than 80m monthly users.

Better still, My Space demonstrated

(continues ad nauseam)

The Sunday Times (Business Person of the Year contenders)
Submitted by Everyone

"He concludes with a Christmas message to the nation: 'Enjoy your days off with the families, sharing gifts and sharing goodwill. But remember, there is no God.' There are several million comedy fans out there on both sides of the Atlantic who might beg to differ.

BENJI WILSON
(interview with Ricky Gervais)
Radio Times
Submitted by Justin Lewis

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

WORLD OF HYPE

SHAMELESSLY cashing in on a fatal explosion at an East Sussex fireworks factory is home survey company Landmark Information.

The week after the incident in which two firefighters were killed and one house was burned down, Landmark's PR people Harrison Cowley dispatched a press release explaining how worried home owners can protect themselves against such hazards – thanks to their searches. "Following disasters such as this it is only natural for people to ask how families can safeguard themselves against industrial accidents like this in the future," quoth managing director James Sherwood-Rogers.

LUVVIES

Every day is a surprise. There are confirmations of an interconnectivity and synchronicity which inspire, titillate and confirm the inherent comedy of the universe.

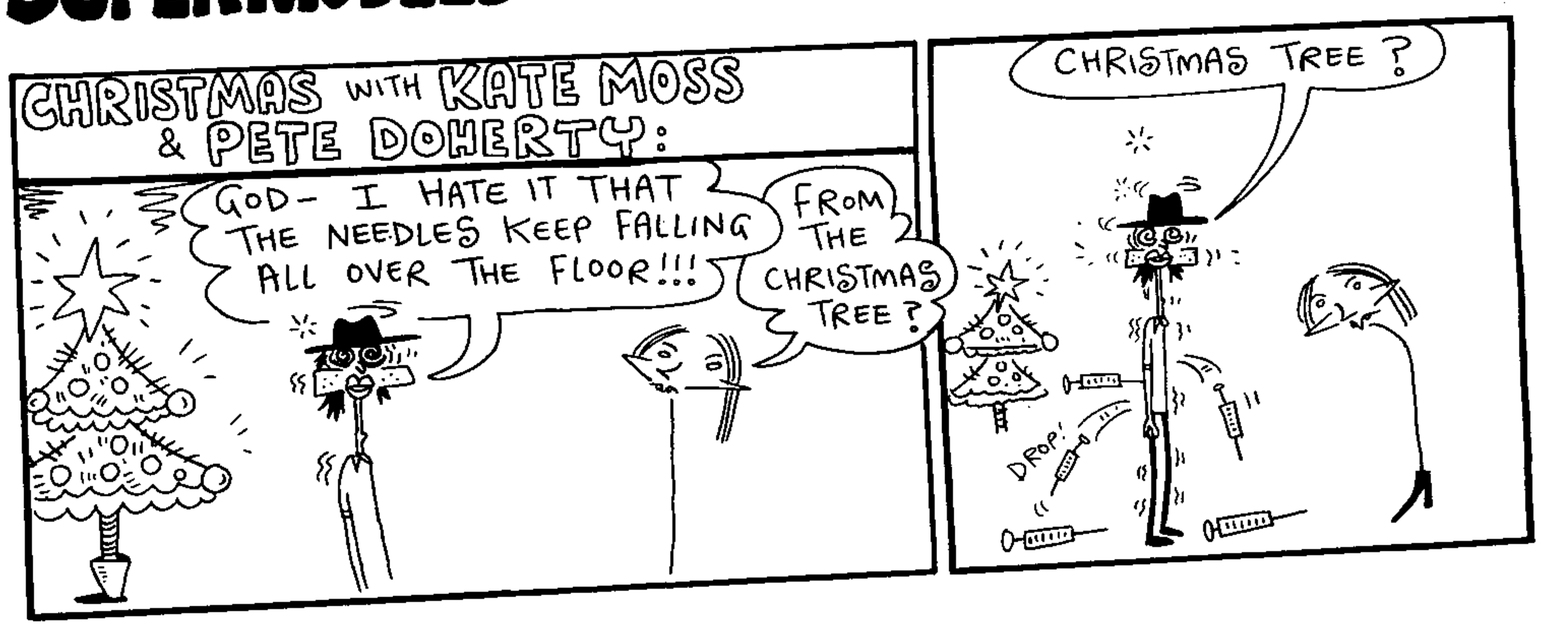
BILLY ZANE
Independent

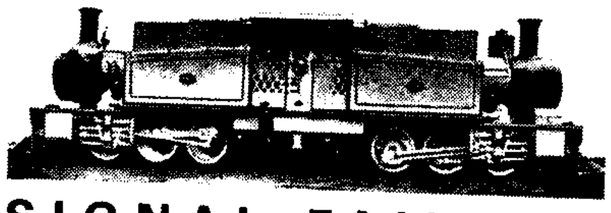
Submitted by Martyn Smith.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


CHRISTMAS WITH KATE MOSS & PETE DOHERTY:
GOD- I HATE IT THAT THE NEEDLES KEEP FALLING ALL OVER THE FLOOR!!!
FROM THE CHRISTMAS TREE?
CHRISTMAS TREE?
DROP!



SIGNAL FAILURES

Festive fare

THE annual new year fares "change" has brought out the rail industry's creative side, ensuring a public baffled by privatised railways doesn't hear the real reasons fares keep rising above inflation.

The Association of Train Operating Companies (Atoc) produced this year's zaniest excuse: "Passengers who have a high income are subsidised by people that are not so well off and don't use trains as much." That assumption seems based on London commuter trains; Britain's most heavily subsidised lines are in rural and depressed post-industrial areas – where people who can afford cars tend to drive and the poor are forced to pay fast-increasing train and bus fares.

Atoc also said: "We need the revenue to pay for the ongoing improvements to the railways that passengers expect." If passengers still expect improvements in return for higher fares, they're in for disappointment on many lines. **First Great Western**, for instance, has just axed prime commuter services to Exeter and Swansea and is shortening many of its trains. FGW, expected by FirstGroup to be a "highly profitable" franchise, tried to pass the buck for a year-on-year fares hike of up to 12.6 percent by claiming that "some of the money raised by these fares changes goes directly to the government". In fact FGW pockets a £94.6m subsidy this year and £42.7m in 2007-8; it won't pay premiums for its franchise until 2009-10.

South West Trains had the same idea but was cleverer with its wording: "Most train companies on the busy commuter lines in London are now paying the government big premiums, so are being forced to raise fares steeply." Most companies perhaps, but not SWT: the company will get a £61.2m subsidy in 2007-8. SWT also said that "it's not as if we're just going to have a party with the extra money". But shareholders in Stagecoach, which owns SWT, may feel in party mood. On 6 December they were told that Stagecoach profits had risen so much they'd share a windfall of at least £400m. Stagecoach founders Brian Souter and his sister Ann Gloag will reportedly gain over £100m. That £400m is enough to buy hundreds of new carriages and cut fares. Instead, SWT will raise fares and strip out seats to cram more standing passengers into existing trains.

Virgin Trains dazzled the public with figures to justify even higher fares: "Travelling on the west coast main line costs an average of 17p a mile, and on the cross country route it is 13p a mile. A family car costs 44p a mile on average." But the family car is ready whenever you want to travel. For equivalent convenience on the railways you would need tickets that don't tie you to specific trains – which cost rather more than Virgin's average prices. A standard-class London to Manchester open return for just one person now costs 55p a mile.

Central Trains, a franchise in its death throes, tried to look on the bright side when explaining higher fares: "We're committed to investing in our trains and stations." Yeah, right. Central leases its trains from banks. Network Rail maintains the stations it uses, and some have been improved by local authorities.

Having franchisees to justify fare "changes" keeps the spotlight off the government, but season tickets and other regulated fares will rise 4.3 percent on 2 January as a matter of "new" Labour policy. Last January Alistair Darling, then transport secretary, explained why such fares must rise 1 percent above inflation annually: "About 57 percent of spend on the railways now comes from passengers; in 1985 that figure was way up at 85 percent. It is important that we strike the right balance." But why do passengers now cover only 57 percent of the industry's costs (the rest comes from taxpayers) after years of whopping fare rises? Had Darling explained that, the public might have concluded that the railways are now less efficient than British Rail was in 1985 because of 15 years of meddling by Whitehall incompetents – ministers and mandarins.

And by the way, in 1985 taxpayers lost no money in profits generated by the rail network. Twenty years later franchisees pocketed £338m in rail profits.

Meanwhile Rod Eddington, former chief of British Airways, has been penning a report advocating road pricing to tackle congestion on the roads. He need have looked no further for a model than the M4's Severn crossing, a PFI deal and one of the most expensive roads to use in Britain at £4.90 per car (£5.10 from next month). Many people from Wales and the Forest of Dean had been opting to park at Severn Tunnel Junction and catch the train to Bristol instead. In a crude way, this bit of the transport network was doing what Eddington recommended in his report to the Treasury and Department for Transport.

Ten days after the report was published, First Great Western slashed the train service for Severn Tunnel Junction, including evening peak trains. That won't reduce costs significantly as the trains still run, just without stopping. FGW reckons the DfT ordered the cut, which rings true because FirstGroup, famed for its greed (*Eyes passim*), is unlikely to sacrifice revenue voluntarily.

But why would the DfT sacrifice revenue when the Treasury wants rail subsidy reduced? Alistair Darling, Gordon's right-hand man and a favourite to be the next chancellor, was transport secretary when the DfT negotiated FGW's franchise. Commuters who now have to drive to and from Bristol pay VAT on the Severn toll, and VAT and duty on the fuel they use. Brown's Treasury is quids in.

What a perfect road-pricing model for "new" Labour: clobber motorists with hefty tolls and, to make doubly sure they have no alternative to coughing up, cut public transport where it's not already crap enough.

'Dr B Ching'

Number crunching

Labour responds to the Stern report on climate change:

2.7% ■ rise in fuel duty for cars, 7 December 2006 (first rise since April 2003)

4.3% ■ rise in government-controlled train fares, 2 January 2007 (fourth rise since April 2003)

"The Wii handset expands the computer games market beyond teenage geeks"

Church News

LAST WEEK, parishioners of St. Mary and St. Michael's Church, Stepney, were forced by lawyers acting on behalf of Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor's Catholic diocese of Westminster to sign a gagging agreement preventing them from criticising a £40m DFES "Learning Village" (New Labourese for "large school") which is being built partly on the graveyard, a much-needed open space, around their church.

When plans were originally submitted for the development, there were more than 300 objections from church-goers, families whose ancestors are buried there and those whose homes will be overlooked by the development. All pointed out that the land had been bequeathed for use by the parish in 1851 and that the diocese had no right to build on it without consulting them.

When workmen arrived at the graveyard on 7 September last year a day-long stand-off between the builders and St Mary's priest Fr. Francis van Son, backed by parishioners, ended with the priest's arrest. When the crowd dispersed, the process of exhuming bodies began. Fr. Francis spent five hours in the cells before a duty solicitor arrived and pointed out that he had been wrongfully arrested – he had keys to the graveyard and was therefore hardly committing "aggravated trespass".

Ignored and humiliated by the diocese, the parishioners formed a limited company and took their case to the High Court. Although they proved that concreting the graveyard was not essential to the "learning village" scheme, the parishioners lost. They were then informed that the diocese intended to pursue those who had set up the company individually for costs of £280,000 plus VAT. Fr. Francis, meanwhile, was forced into retirement by the diocese.

The Church then intimated that the costs claim would be dropped if the parishioners agreed to give up their protests. Last week they reluctantly signed a statement in which they accepted the ruling of the court and undertook not to "act or speak out" against the school facilities.

The irony is that they were never opposed to the new school per se – only to the heavy-handed, bullying behaviour of the Roman Catholic Church.

'Gargoyle'

A Grim Christmas Carol Part Three — Knife & Packer

IT WAS CHRISTMAS EVE AND THE FIRST GHOST CAME TO VISIT MISERLY DOT.COM START-UP OWNER JEZBENEZER SCROOGE...
I AM THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST! LOOK, HERE YOU ARE AS A YOUNG MAN, TURNING INTO A MISER- DECLINING A CHRISTMAS SOIREE AT A TOP GASTRO PUB TO OVERSEE A TRANSATLANTIC VIDEO CONFERENCE
NO SOONER HAD THE GHOST VANISHED THAN A SECOND GHOST APPEARED...
I AM THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT! LOOK AT THE JOY THAT CHRISTMAS BRINGS! SEE HOW DIFFERENTLY SIZED TIM ENJOYS A HOMEMADE SCOOTER...
FINALLY A THIRD GHOST APPEARED...
I AM THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE! LOOK AT YOUR DECLINE, BURIED ALONE WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A NON-DENOMINATIONAL CEREMONY...
AT LEAST THE COFFIN IS MADE FROM 100% RECYCLED CARDBOARD AND IS BIO-DEGRADABLE

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

PARKING KERMITS

KEN LIVINGSTONE and Friends of the Earth were among those who rushed to congratulate the London borough of Richmond for its headline-grabbing plan to increase parking permits from £100 to £300 a year for the owners of gas-guzzling cars and 4x4s.

The Lib-Dem council's leader, Serge Lourie, said the measure was a start in tackling climate change – "the single greatest challenge facing the world". A limited "consultation" of residents ended on 15 December. Alas, apart from being of dubious legality, Richmond's bold initiative appears to be little more than, er, hot air.

Chief justification was a study on CO_2 emissions by the Department of Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra). Its authors made clear that data was provisional and should not be relied upon when formulating policy, but the council declared: "Richmond householders produce more CO_2 than most other boroughs in London. A significant amount of this is attributed to transport and travel activities." In fact, Richmond is 25th out of 33 London boroughs in terms of total CO_2 emissions, 17th in terms of domestic emissions and 18th for transport emissions. Emissions from homes, shops and offices make up 78 percent of the total, with road transport being the source of 22 percent. But a big proportion of that comes from buses and lorries rather than private cars. And thousands of vehicles from outside the borough pass through on main roads such as the South Circular and the A3.

Only about a third of Richmond's households are in controlled parking zones (CPZs), and of those about 50 percent need parking permits – so the charges will potentially fall on a minority among one-sixth of the borough's residents. The wealthiest, with large cars and off-street parking, will be unaffected. As will those who live on council estates and may drive older, more environmentally unfriendly cars.

The scheme is intended to encourage people to leave cars at home and use public transport. But that's exactly why many residents need parking permits – they leave their cars at home (not emitting anything) and go to work by bus and train. Those who remove their cars from a CPZ before its hours of operation and bring them back after it is over for the day – e.g. people who commute by car, pumping out CO_2 as they crawl across London – may even be able to get by without a permit.

P.S. The Lib-Dems' grasp of figures on this issue is clearly shaky. Since November the party's website has carried a news release claiming that annual per capita UK emissions are 9.2 million tonnes of CO_2 per head – only out by a factor of a million!

●A WEEK after Tony Blair expressed his "deep sorrow" for Britain's part in the slave trade, Bristol city council passed a motion regretting "the actions of past Bristol citizens engaged in the slave trade and the consequential crime against humanity ... experienced by millions of Afrikans..." Afrikans? The text of the motion throughout spells "Africa" and "Africans" with a K. Surely even Bristol city council can't be that illiterate? Indeed not – "it's the preferred spelling among Afro-Caribbean communities and those who work with black and minority ethnic groups", the council's spokesperson tells the *Eye*. Oh yeah? And, of course, of other notably PC groups such as Rommel's Afrika Korps and the former apartheid regime of Suid Afrika!

RICHES TO WRAGGES (cont.)

WILL solicitor Mark Greenburgh's attempt to prove a "misconduct" case against Doncaster council's managing director Susan Law prove to be third time unlucky for his firm, Wragge & Co?

Wragges has been hired to stand up allegations of "bullying" against Ms Law, who has barely been in the job two years. Her supporters claim the real motive behind the move to get rid of her is Mayor Martin Winter's annoyance at the fact that she called in Knacker to investigate allegations of corruption surrounding Winter's pet regeneration project, the Glass Park (*Eyes passim*).

Eye 1172 recalled how in 2003 Wragges ran up a bill of £168,000 in an attempt to make a case against another whistleblowing chief executive, David Bowles, at Tory Lincolnshire county council. He eventually left with a £400,000 payoff. The affair cost the taxpayer more than £580,000 and council leader Ian Croft his job.

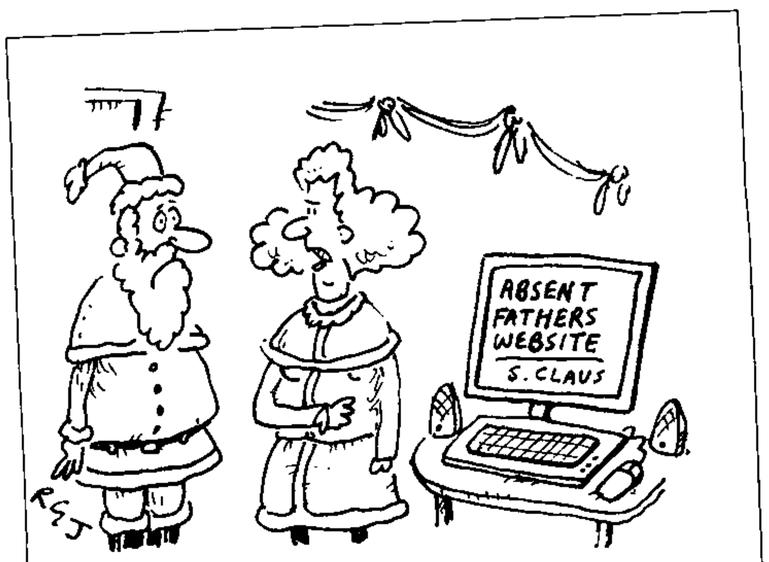
Wragges' most recent triumph was in north-east Derbyshire last year. In February 2005 the Labour council's leader, David Nuttall, was barred from holding public office for three years after a Standards Board investigation found he bullied staff and interfered in wage negotiations so as to confer an "improper advantage" on his son, who worked for the council (*Eye* 1127). Because the chief executive, Carole Gilby, had given evidence against Nuttall, councillors sought revenge by accusing her of incompetence and "misconduct". Wragges' Mark Greenburgh headed the case against her. Tim Kerr QC was appointed at a cost of £93,000 to adjudicate. His report concluded that Wragges' evidence was "surprisingly weak" and there was no evidence of wrongdoing by Ms Gilby, who should be reinstated. By this stage the attempted chief execicide had cost the council £633,000, including Wragges' fee of £284.931. But then Ms Gilby decided she didn't want her job back after all, and received a £350,000 payoff. By the time the council had spent £50,000 looking for a replacement, the total bill picked up by the taxpayer came to £1,033,167 and 10p.

Come on, Donny – you can top that!

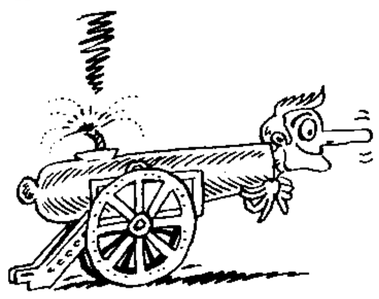
SANTA'S SACK

THE TIMING of former Walsall council chief executive Annie Shepperd's move to the London borough of Southwark last summer looks better by the day.

Last week Walsall agreed to pay sacked whistleblower Peter Francis a smidge under £600,000 in compensation, tax and legal costs. Mr Francis, the council's former "head of regeneration programme management", was fired after raising concerns about a string of financial irregularities, in particular the juggling of large sums from the neighbourhood renewal fund (NRF). Internal auditors backed Mr Francis's claims and found that £850,000 of NRF money paid to Serco (*Eyes passim*), the company that runs Education Walsall, "cannot be totally accounted for". When Francis asked for an explanation of why £100,000 had been transferred from Education Walsall to help balance the books of social services, he received a reply which ended: "This email will self-destruct if an auditor comes within 10ft of it." Ms Shepperd will no doubt be eager to read a forthcoming auditors' report which should reveal exactly how Mr Francis came to be sacked.



"I've named and shamed you for being away at Christmas"



PIPELINE PRESSURE

YET more pandemonium in the council chambers of south Wales, where safety fears over National Grid's plans for a high-pressure gas pipeline continue to cause uproar at planning meetings (*Eyes* 1170 & 1171).

Trouble has spread to Swansea, where NG's application to build a compressor plant at Felindre is the focus of another voting controversy. Campaigners were incensed when planning officer David Gill said safety issues should be left to the Health and Safety Executive. Plaid Cymru member Darren Price, who fears the plant would be too near the DVLA offices and a local hospital, asked for Swansea's full planning committee to decide the issue, not just an area panel. Yet a debate began regardless, in which Cllr Price repeated his call for a deferral before speaking against the plant. It ended with chairman Audrey Clement taking a vote and declaring that National Grid's application had been carried by 17-4.

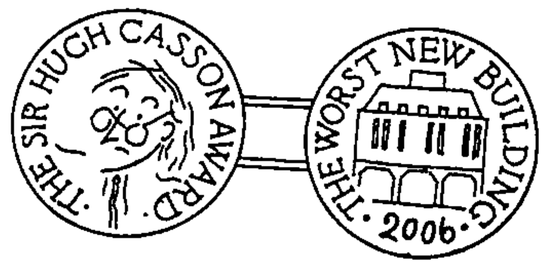
As Cllr Price complained that his motion had been ignored, rumblings began in the public gallery. Security guards were summoned to eject protesters who then occupied the lobby. Cllr Price complained to the legal department, and every councillor was interviewed to see if they realised exactly what they were voting for. Although a third of councillors wanted the matter reconsidered, officers ruled the vote should stand. Price is now seeking independent legal advice.

●AN Audit Commission inspection of Lewisham council's housing service finds little improvement since the last inspection. But there are some positives. Area housing offices were found to be accessible places for the public. But blind people, the report noted, might not have been too impressed by the office, where signs in Braille were, er, behind glass.

A Grim Christmas Carol
Part Four
Knife & Packer
IT WAS CHRISTMAS MORNING AND JEZBENEZER SCROOGE AWOKE, SEEING AT LAST THE ERROR OF HIS WAYS! HE MADE AT ONCE TO THE GUAVAPORIUM HEALTH FOOD SHOP...
I WANT YOU TO SEND THE PRIZE WINNING NUT ROAST IN YOUR WINDOW TO MY WEB DESIGNER, MAY HE AND DIFFERENTLY SIZED TIM FEAST UPON IT!
HE THEN BUMPED INTO THE CHARITY MUGGERS...
YES I DO HAVE A MINUTE! LET ME FILL IN THAT DIRECT DEBIT FORM...
FINALLY, HE JOINED HIS NEPHEW FOR CHRISTMAS DAY...
NEPHEW! LET'S TALK ABOUT THAT ECO HOLIDAY IN JAVA YOU ALWAYS WANTED US TO GO ON!
A MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE time has come for the award of the Sir Hugh Casson Medal for 2006. As usual, the choice is difficult as the range of pretentious, ill-mannered or simply mediocre new buildings is so impressive.



A strong contender was the Palace of Peace and Accord in Astana, Kazakhstan's new capital, as it has been designed by our own Foster and Partners. The palace, aka the Borat Building, has a congress chamber in the apex of its pyramid which is lit by stained glass windows depicting doves ascending towards the sun – the motif on the Kazakh flag. The pyramid is one of several iconic buildings in the formerly obscure city, made the capital in 1994 by Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's dictator – sorry, president. It is sited opposite the presidential palace, and in fact it was Nazarbayev who came up with the idea of a pyramid. The contractor then asked Foster and Partners if they would like to "design" it. No doubt this prestigious, award-winning design factory agonised long and hard before taking the job. But they felt they could, insists one of the partners, David Nelson, as they concluded that the pyramid form enjoyed a convincing relationship to the programme. "As a representational form for what he was trying to do, the pyramid fitted pretty well." Furthermore, "we liked the hierarchical disposition of the pyramid. The top is clearly the most important part and the base is broader. It is a perfect hierarchical diagram."

So that's all right then. I must say this job dispels any lingering, silly notion that modern architecture has anything to do with democracy or social justice or any other enlightenment value. The Modern Movement can be the architecture of democracy, or of global capitalism, or fascism, or anything. And it is clear that Milord Foster of Thames Bank will work for anybody providing they can afford him. But no single designer can claim copyright on the pyramid, and it is by now a banal concept. Besides, our Norman has won the Casson Medal far too often.

The award must go to a glass building nearer at hand: the so-called Palestra building in Blackfriars Road, London. This is a £140m block of commercial offices, built by Blackfriars Investments, which has been let to Transport for London and the London Development Agency. It replaces Orbit House, a boring 1960s office tower by Colonel Seifert which once housed the India Office Library. The new building is not at all boring, far from it. It is a masterpiece by SMC Alsop – that is, Will Alsop, the cheery, boozy, lurching middle-aged genius who goes in for "risk-taking" design, who gave us Peckham Library and whose brilliant idea for "masterplanning" Bradford was to build a large pond in its centre (*Eyes passim*).

The main body of the Palestra building, a seven-storey glazed block, appears to be sloping. The east end rests on the ground but the west end is seemingly up on stilts that are, naturally, not boringly vertical but wittily skewed – which must have been fun for the structural engineer. Under this raised end is squeezed a "pod" or "organic pebble-like object" which is the main entrance. However, above the gently sloping seven-storey block are three more floors in a glass block cantilevered out over its north side and Blackfriars Road.

Now, long experience tends to confirm that commercial as well as domestic interior space is most convenient when the floors are horizontal. The pattern of glazing on the Palestra building is, however, designed to suggest that all the floors are sloping. There is therefore no logical connection between exterior and interior – how very amusing. Architects like to play games, but the basic tenet of all serious architecture – and especially of so-called Functionalism, the aesthetic Alsop is here exploiting – is that the elevations in some way express the interior volumes. This building, in contrast, is dominated by one big, fatuous idea: that it is a rectilinear block which is lifted up at one end and is therefore leaning. Architecture thus boils down to little more than an exciting concept by a superstar architect, and all the real work is done by the structural engineer – in this case by the façade engineer, Buro Happold, who had to cope with the discordance between horizontal floors and sloping glazing.

So the Palestra building, a giant gimmick that is also plain ugly, is a most worthy recipient of the Casson Medal for 2006 as it confirms just how intellectually vacuous and posturing modern British architecture has become.

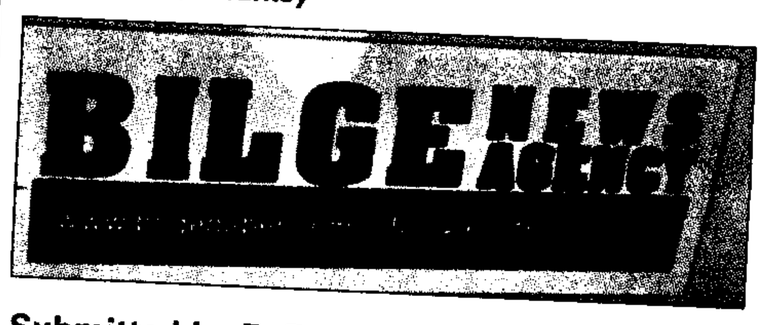
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Predictable fuss over Sarah Lucas's Christmas tree decorations of bulging body parts made of stretched tights.
TATE BRITAIN
Yes, you can't beat a traditional Christmas!

I-SPY *Turkey*



Submitted by R. Farr. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

ANYONE who wandered into the Festival Hall just now (not easy to do given the security) would see an extraordinary sight: a vast, black space that used to be the auditorium, stripped of almost everything that made it recognisable and with armies of men in hard hats replacing the audience.

It's the £111m transformation of the South Bank Centre in action. And if everything happens as the South Bank Board insists – completion of rebuilding next February, reopening next June, impressive new acoustics, spectacular new vistas etc etc – it should be the most exciting development in the London arts for years..

But the "ifs" are starting to multiply. Acoustic experts disagree on whether all this work and money will actually make much difference to the sound in the hall, which has always been dead and absorbed in a way that leaves performers unable to hear themselves properly. For all the refurbishment, the hall will be the same shape and still have the same high proportion of seats to space, which a lot of experts think unworkable. None of the world's best concert halls has more than 2,000 seats. The RFH has 3,000. Problem.

As for the completion plans, the board has just (and rather quietly) released the news that everything will not, in fact, be ready for the opening in June. The organ won't be there, only a makeshift bit of it. What is more, a combination of logistics and lack of money (the South Bank is still £7m short in its fund-raising) means that the organ won't be there for years. The estimated date is 2011 – a long way off but just in time for the cultural programme of the 2012 Olympics, for which Jude Kelly is responsible in addition to her job as the South Bank's head of arts. No doubt she'll pull the stops out, as it were, to make sure it happens.

With all this, and with aspects of the redesign that are likely to stir anti-elitists into action when they find out (not least, turning the bit of the building with the best river views into a sort of club-class lounge for paying "members") it may not be quite such a smooth ride through to June as the South Bank expects. Time will tell.

MEANWHILE, time is telling for poor Roberto Alagna, the diminutive French tenor who last week stormed off the stage of La Scala, Milan after being booed during a high-profile production of *Aida*.

It was reported throughout the world as (literally) a hissy fit. But the truth is that many at La Scala were expecting him not to turn up in the first place.

For years now Alagna has been pushing his voice into roles that don't suit it, with consequent damage. He should never have been singing *Aida*, and he knew it – indeed he didn't show for the pre-opening party, traditional at La Scala, where the singers mingle with the press. It was said that he wasn't feeling well. In fact, he'd fallen out with the director Zeffirelli, who had criticised his poor performance in rehearsals. Now he's fallen out with the La Scala management who have been mortally embarrassed by the whole affair. Last week Alagna grandly said he would return to the production later in the run. Er, no he won't, countered the management, he's been replaced.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Slayed

Sir,

It's bad enough that for the last 2,000 years, various unsavoury characters have blamed the Jews for killing Jesus; but I've never before heard of being blamed for getting the three wise kings as well (Cartoon, Eye 1173).

Regards,
STEVE HILL,

Via email.

PS: It's easy to know that the Xmas story is all made up, anyway – whoever heard of three wise men in the Middle East?

Sir,

Woodcock's witty cartoon showing an Israeli jet bombing the Magi was clever. In the current climate, however, it would have been far more likely that one of the Magi was a suicide bomber on the way to kill Jewish baby Jesus.

BARRY HYMAN,

Bushey Heath.

Sir,

Perhaps it is unreasonable to expect factual accuracy from a cartoon; but Woodcock's "Black Christmas" cartoon (8 December) depicting an Israeli aircraft bombing the three wise men on their way to Bethlehem is a bit much; this summer, after all, inhabitants of Nazareth were killed by Syrian rockets fired from launchers in Lebanon; and the Jewish state does not attack those who believe in the divinity of Christ. I appreciate that all this is much more difficult to draw.

Yours in slight disappointment,
ANNE SUMMERS (DR),

The Women's Library, London Metropolitan University.

Helmet tips

Sir,

This is the second time I have been forced to write to you on the subject of cartoons about the Christmas truces of 1914. On this occasion I refer to page 20 of Eye 1173.

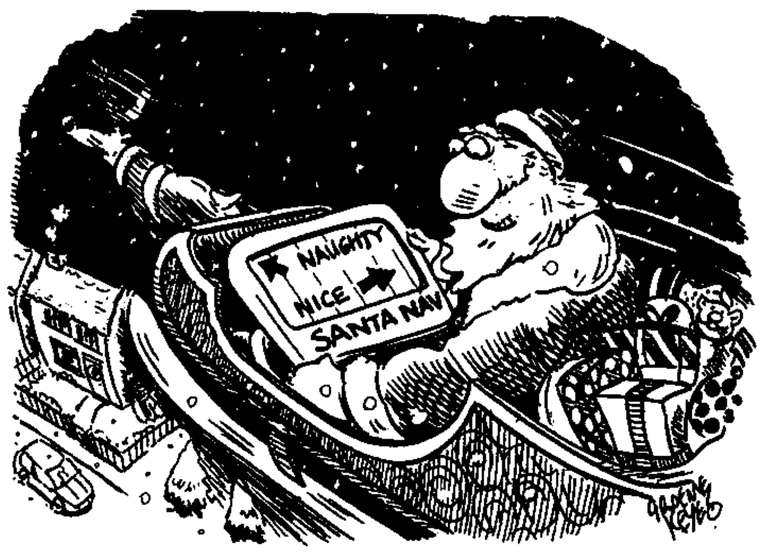
*British troops were not issued with steel helmets until June 1916. They were not worn with a netting cover during the Great War. Webbing was the 1908 canvas or 1914 leather pattern, not the 1937 pattern shown. The German tunic, whether **Waffenrock** or **Bluse** had neither breast pockets nor lapels. And is that supposed to be the **Pikelhaube** or the **Stahlhelm**, which latter was not, in any case, issued until 1916?*

How much longer must this go on? I suggest you circularise your cartoonists with this important information. Should any more such items be planned for the future, I should be happy to advise.

Fröhliche Weihnachten, Tommy.

JAMES REEVE,

Manchester.



Old goats

Sir,

You criticise Animal Aid for attacking the practice of sending farm animals to needy Third World communities (Eye 1173), implying that, being in favour of vegetarianism, it isn't qualified to express an opinion on the benefits of this policy.

The charity Vegfam, unlike Oxfam and Christian Aid, supports projects that provide aid without the use of animals. On its website (www.veganvillage.co.uk/vegfam) it has some interesting figures showing how many people 10 acres of land can support, depending on how it's farmed.

Used for cattle, it can support two people. Growing maize, it can support 10; growing wheat, 24; growing soya, 60.

The message must surely be clear: giving up meat, and preferably milk, doesn't just reduce animal suffering, it could feed the world's human population too. Vegetarians and vegans have been saying this for decades, but it seems to be an uncomfortable truth whose time has not yet come. If it ever does, people will surely look back and wonder how we could have been so selfish. Something to ponder at this season of goodwill and mass avian slaughter.

Yours sincerely,
DEREK GREATREX,

Caversham, Berks.

Sir,

You may well be right about Animal Aid and the World Land Trust having their own motives for opposing the provision of goats to developing countries, but the association between goats and desertification does not derive only from the 2001 New Scientist article you referred to.

*There is a wealth of material on the risk posed by goat pastorage to marginal ecosystems, from the on-line Global Invasive Species Database all the way back to the Athenian dramatist Eupolis (5th century BC) whose comedy The Goats depicts the eponymous creatures as ruthlessly devouring all the vegetation of the Attic countryside. Referalization is also a problem, echoes of which can be seen in Aesop's fables. However they are **calculable** risks, that can be run. Provided that these fascinating animals, with their good and efficient yield of healthy milk, are kept in a controlled fashion they can be of immense value to a community. Presumably Oxfam, Christian Aid and the other promoters of the give-à-goat schemes have done their calculations.*

Yours faithfully,
CLIVE CHEESMAN,

Via email.

Mass debate?

Sir,

Re your item "Called to Ordure" by "Gavel Basher", Eye 1173.

I want to thank all at your esteemed organ, especially your correspondent "Gavel Basher". The honour you have done me in giving me a plug is not underestimated by my constituents. But I am afraid that I must state that my being mentioned in the "Called to Ordure" piece was not deserved.

Whilst I very much encourage Private Eye to report on our proceedings in Parliament, I am afraid that on this occasion you were the victim of gross misreporting.

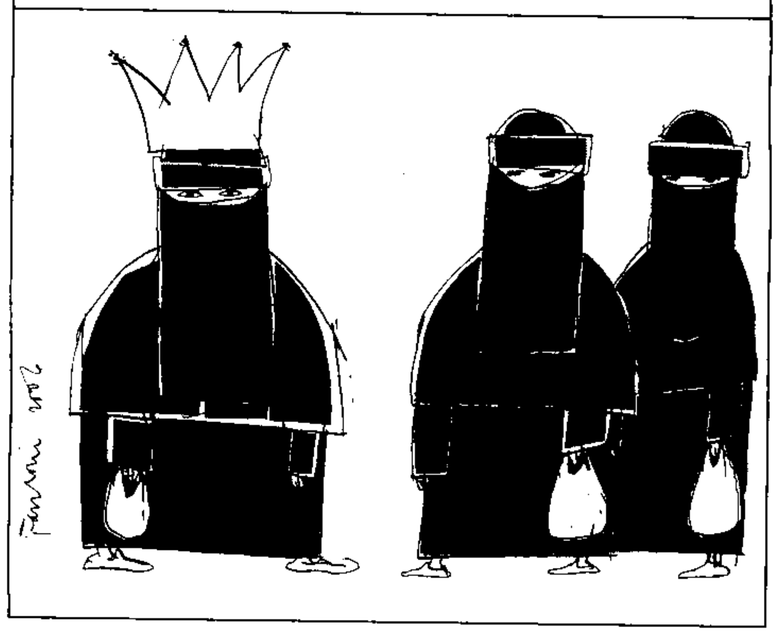
I can only think that your informant was distracted during the debate in question, for example, perhaps in this instance what was being bashed was not a gavel but something smaller but just as easy to handle, not made out of wood and probably less noisey (sic).

I think that we should be told.

Seasons Greetings,
STEPHEN HESFORD MP,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



Full frontal

Sir,

I always look forward at this time of year to Gnome's Mail Mart, and this year's did not disappoint. However, at the risk of betraying anorakdom, I cannot allow you to get away with the Geigostick 2006 as a Polonium-210 detector.

Po-210 is an Alpha emitter, and there are no detectors of any sort which can directly pick up alpha rays – the Geiger-Muller tube in particular, being a very insensitive detector, can only manage beta particles and, indirectly, gamma rays.

I could give you a full explanation if you required, but briefly, to detect an alpha particle, the radioactive substance has to be mixed with a liquid like naphtha, whose molecules absorb the alphas which can only manage to travel little more than a couple of molecules' distance. These then emit a flash of light which is detected by highly sensitive photocells.

If you think of a beta particle as a poppy seed travelling at thousands of miles an hour, then an alpha particle is like a 40-ton juggernaut moving at 10mph. I know which one I would prefer to take my chances with in a full-frontal encounter.

Merry Christmas.

BRYN GLOVER,

Cracoe, North Yorkshire.

Joined-up editing

Sir,

I hope to be the first of many to point out that on p4 of this week's Eye (1173) you have an item headed "Joined-Up Opposition" whilst on p6 you have an identical item also headed "Joined-Up Opposition".

Do I get a fiver?

PAUL WESSON,

Carterton.

(No. Ed.)

"Oh no! Carol swingers..."

Cork it

Sir,

Being a corkhead (Islander), I'd have to say that, dodgy contracts aside, the rest of the story is misleading to the mainlanders.

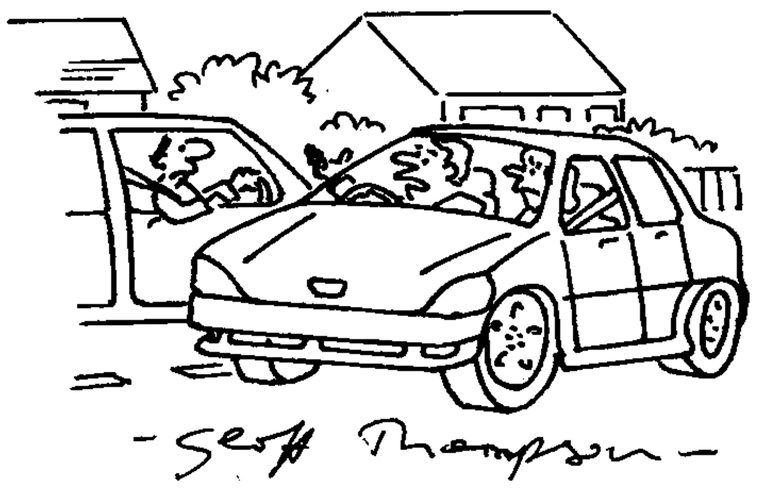
The majority of the coastal road from Ventnor to Freshwater is unstable, and you have to look no further than Blackgang Chine to see the folly of building on clay cliffs that look southwest over the sea. The undercliff area is no better, and has always suffered from landslides, so much so that my parents were told they wouldn't get a mortgage or insurance on houses in the area – and that was back in the late '70s.

Any Islander will tell you that driving from Ventnor to Niton (the next village along from Whitwell) can be done via the undercliff, but best done by driving through Whitwell, as indeed the buses all do.

The real story isn't the dubious way the initial contract has been handled, but the fact that the money spent on any road along the undercliff is a criminal waste of money. This whole part of the Island is unstable, and therefore unsuitable for future development or investment – especially public money.

LAWRENCE ATTRILL,

Farnborough, Hants.



"No, we agreed that we'd come to you this Christmas"

Written in stone

Sir,

Tim Hall (Monument Folly? Letters Eye 1173) is entitled to his opinion, but he could at least get his facts right. Firstly, the inscription on the Cenotaph reads "The Glorious Dead", not "To our Glorious Dead" – ironically, they died defending the right of people such as him to express his opinions.

Secondly, far from being a "mad monarch's" attempt to "atone", the Cenotaph was erected as a temporary structure, as Piloti explained, for the first anniversary of Armistice Day, but it struck such a chord with the public that it was "permamently re-erected". Many of us still find it very moving today – due in no small part to its setting. "LEAVE THE CENOTAPH ALONE."

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD BREESE,

Via email.

Cleaning up

Sir,

I enjoyed the joke about the Airfix Takeover Kit in Eye 1172, but you overlooked just one thing – the human cost. Surely the instructions should include a step to sweep up all the discarded employees who had previously thought they had a secure job.

Thanks for the great magazine.

Best wishes,
SARAH DAWSON (MISS),

Newcastle, Tyne & Wear.

CHRISTMAS SOLUTIONS

"Smart Christmas Solutions: the single source solution for Christmas shopping" – *shop*

"Amazon Home and Garden great Christmas Gift solutions" – *presents*

"Morrisons wrap solutions" – *wrapping paper*

"Planet Pursuits Corporate Days: Christmas Solutions" – *office parties*

"Hobbycraft Solutions for Displaying Your Christmas Cards" – *ribbons and Blu-Tack*

"Kria Yoga's Christmas Message: Peaceful Global Solutions" – *peace on earth*

All submitted by readers

Pseuds you sir

Sir,

"Art exists for no purpose beyond itself..." The statement by Germaine Greer that you unkindly inserted in Pseuds Corner (7 Dec 2006) looks to me like a reasonable definition of autonomous art, the dominant conception of art since Kant. ("The unsynthesised manifold" refers to Kant.) Does saying these things make me a Pseud too?

Yours,
DR ANDY HAMILTON,

Dept of Philosophy, Durham University.

Pseuds you too

Sir,

*Why have you put Russell Brand in Pseuds Corner again? He is a comedian who talks/writes the way he does to make people laugh – it is all part of the act. Unfortunately I am **not** a comedian, so can't think of a funny comment to make about this so you probably won't print this.*

Yours faithfully,
JANE HANDLEY,

Saltburn-by-the-Sea, N. Yorks.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"I suppose that was the sort of game Newcastle fans enjoy – as long as the outcome is what the outcome was at the end of it."
GLEN ROEDER, Standard Lite
("davidry")

"History is made to be broken."
GERRY FRANCIS, Sky Sports News
("Hazz")

"... we got back into the game in the second half; unfortunately we failed to turn the nail on them."
STUART PEARCE, BBC1
(David Minney)

"And he [Kevin Pietersen] has come out and rolled up his arms and his sleeves..."
NASSER HUSSEIN, Sky
(Paul White)

"I'm better than them at things they can't do..."
JOEY BARTON, Radio 5 Live
(Steve Mann)

Photo Opportunity

Sir,

In these times when so few people are prepared to embrace Christmas with any enthusiasm, do you by any chance have any photographs illustrating trans-generational, multi-ethnic seasonal goodwill?

Yours,
ENA B. RILLEAUX-PADDLE,

London W1.

Porter 'pervert' risk

Sir,

You report (Eye 1172) that Westminster City Council officials are refusing to release information that could prove Shirley Porter guilty of perjury, on the grounds that it forms part of a confidential settlement with her. I'm no legal expert, but wouldn't this make them potentially accessories after the fact, not to mention possibly guilty of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and/or obstructing the police in the execution of their duties?

Regards,
ROD PARKES,

Hong Kong.

Called to a count

Sir,

Re: Books of the Year (Part One).

I was amused to see your choice for the Snootiest Reviewer Award, Mr Robert Macfarlane (issue 1173). You have quoted him as saying "Only two new books impressed me this year". By my reckoning, that's two more books than your own reviewer has liked. I have read every copy of your publication this year and despite close scrutiny, I have yet to find a single favourable book review in your literary section. Is there any chance that you can induct your resident critic into the Snooty Hall of Fame and present him/her with a special Lifetime Achievement Award?

MIKE CHARALAMBOUS,

Hove.

"Oh no! The ghost of Christmas post!"

Letter from **Ethiopia**

from Our Own Correspondent

OUR salutations to Hilary Benn, Britain's international development secretary who declared with such hoopla in January that he was cutting off direct aid to our government following last year's dodgy election here.

"The provision of budget support is based upon shared commitments between partners, one of which is upholding human rights," he wrote in a letter to the *Times*. "Recent political events have led to a breach of trust on this." Yet in truth, the British are now giving us more money than ever before, and this despite the fact that more than a hundred opposition leaders and journalists are on trial on trumped-up charges of treason and attempted genocide.

Whereas the total British spend in Ethiopia was £64m in our 2005-06 fiscal year, in 2006-07 we will get £84m. The only difference is that the Department for International Development and the World Bank have developed a nice New Labour accounting fudge for their aid money, renaming budget support as "protection of basic services".

DfID says aid money is now being transferred directly to regional authorities, which it regards as more accountable and less politicised. But a report in June by our auditor-general, Lemma Argaw, indicated that approximately $600m (£305m) in transfers to the regions was unaccounted for in 2003-04. Our prime minister, Meles Zenawi, a member of Blair's Commission for Africa, gave a furious response – saying in parliament that the regional state governments could "burn the money" if they wanted, it had nothing to do with him. He omitted to say whether the bonfires should be built using money from British or Ethiopian taxpayers.

Argaw, in office since 1979, was predictably, and illegally, sacked last month by direct order of Meles, even though only parliament has the authority to sack the auditor-general.

In fact all of the state governments are headed by the governing "coalition" (in which only Meles's ethnically based party, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, wields any real power) or its allies, and provincial governors are effectively appointed by the PM. They are not independent.

However, the changes will have reduced what little leverage Britain had over human rights and democracy here. Donor pressure might have come in handy, especially since the head and vice-head of a government-appointed commission into last year's post-election violence have had to flee. Their report said that at least 193 people were killed, mostly by police and the army. Many claim the true figure is far higher.

Meanwhile, Ethiopia has sent thousands of troops to prop up the government in neighbouring Somalia, which has lost control of much of the country to Al-Qaeda-linked Islamists. In October, Meles admitted after months of stonewalling that our troops were indeed in Somalia. But he said the deployment was limited to a handful of instructors when in fact thousands of combat troops have been sent. Invasions are never cheap, so we can expect more funds to go missing from the balance sheet in the near future.

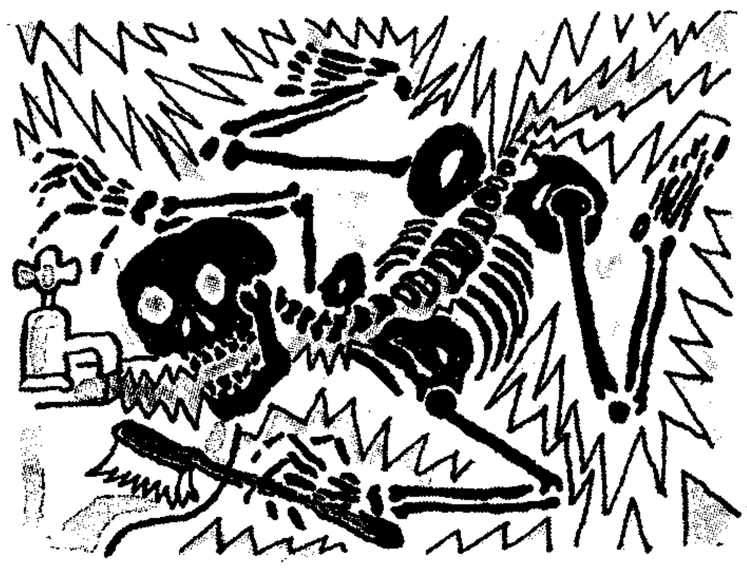
As part of its efforts to boost accountability, DfID has advertised the fact that records of expenditure will now be posted around our country at local level so people can see how the money is being used. It sounds charmingly transparent: villagers gathering around the front door of the local school to see how every textbook was purchased. In truth this system of local accountability, which would create added bureaucracy anyway, is purely hypothetical. It is nowhere in operation and DfID admits that it will not even begin to be implemented for more than a year. By that time press reports of dozens being shot on the streets of Addis Ababa will be forgotten, and it may well be business as usual as DfID reverts to funnelling cash directly to the central government.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"I was brushing my teeth during a thunderstorm," Natasha Timarovic told a press conference in the Croatian city of Zadar, "and had just put my mouth under the tap to rinse away the toothpaste when a bolt of lighting struck the building. I suddenly felt this incredible pain surge right through my body, then everything went dark and I don't really know what happened after that. I don't remember anything clearly until I woke up in hospital, and was told by the nurses that the lightning had passed right through my body, entering through my mouth and shooting out through my anus. And that the house was badly burnt".

Doctors at the City Hospital added that "the accident was bizarre, because the



lightning travelled along the metal water pipe as it descended through the building. Fortunately, Ms Timarovic was wearing rubber bathroom shoes at the time, otherwise she would have been killed instantly by the blast. Instead, it appears that her buttocks were touching the damp shower curtain as she bent over to put her mouth under the tap, so the electricity shot in through her mouth, then out through her backside, and earthed through the curtain, setting it alight. We have treated her for severe burns to her mouth and anus, and are keeping her in overnight for observation, but we expect her to make a full recovery." *(The Australian, 9/10/06. Spotter: Ian Cameron)*

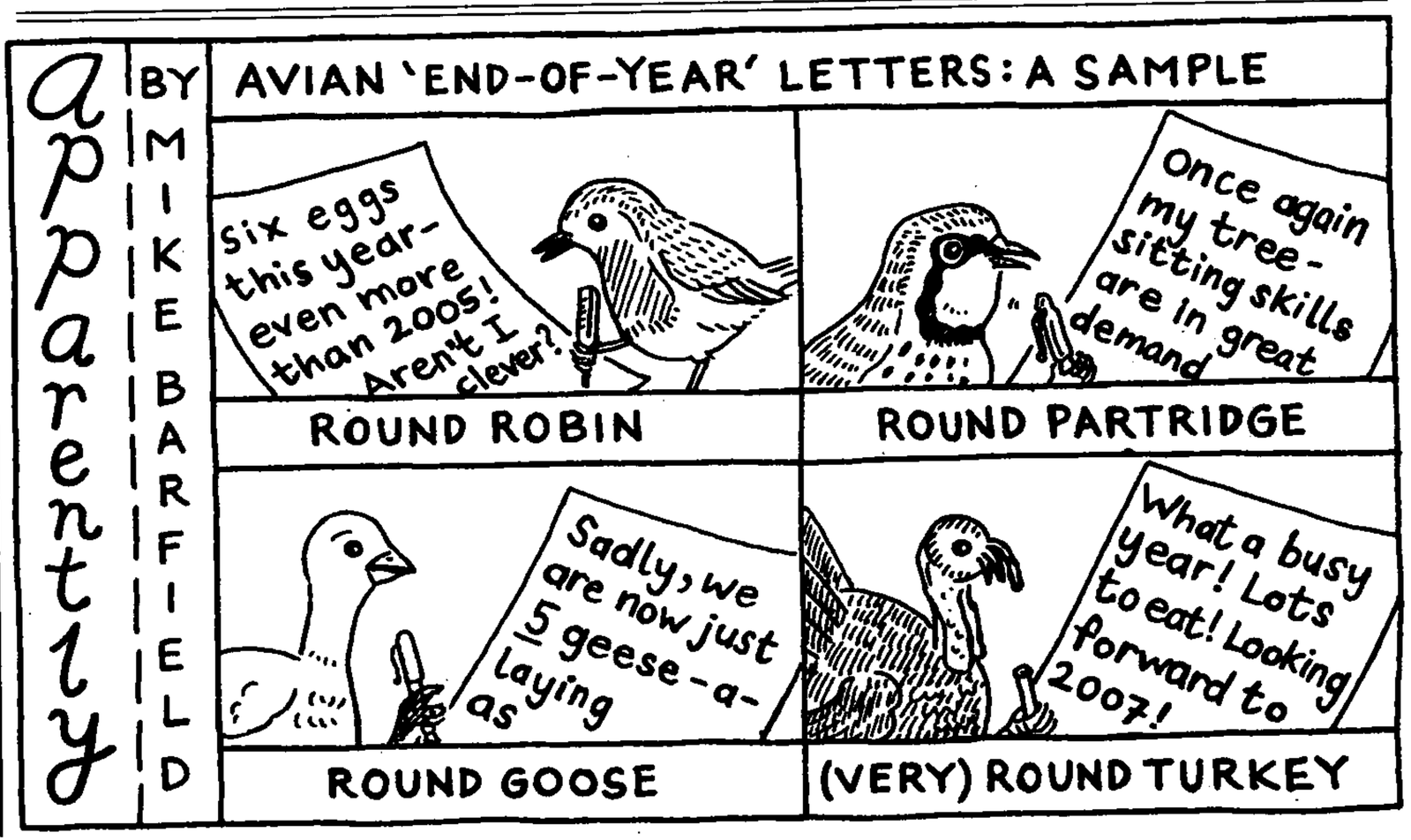
"*This restroom on Concourse D is equipped with a prototype sound artwork, designed to playfully engage the traveller with an unexpected serenade while washing. Five sinks are equipped with an interactive sounds system that plays voices singing the familiar tune, 'Row Row Row Your Boat, Gently Down The Stream.' The singing sinks are user-activated to play one line of the song with each use of the sink. An informal 'round' of singing is therefore created as people use the different sinks.*

"To create an authentic 'voice in the plumbing' sound, the speaker is mounted in non-functional plumbing connected to the drainpipe. A water flow switch installed in the water line activates the digital sounds to play (starting on the downbeat) as travellers draw water. If this prototype is approved, a thematic approach will identify the various restrooms throughout Concourse D by kitting out each one with a unique melody or audio motif. Songs with a Southern background and performed by local artists will be featured, as well as internationally-known tunes." (Notice in public restroom, Concourse D, Atlanta GA International Airport. Spotter: Alex Wade)

– o –

"Rickey Ciarniello may be a Hells Angel, but he has feelings too," his solicitor told a court in Vancouver, "and those feelings have been hurt. For 23 years, he has proudly worn his Hells Angels colours, jacket, and insignia. But since the Ontario Superior Court ruled in 2005 that the Hells Angels is a criminal organisation, people have become increasingly rude to him, and refused to sit next to him in restaurants. He has experienced prejudice, and that is why he has filed this affidavit – to challenge the stigma of the ruling, which has infringed his section seven rights of life, liberty, and security of person."

Later, sixty-one-year-old Ciarniello (dressed in a jacket bearing the words 'Vancouver Hells Angels') told the court that "since the ruling, I have noticed a marked difference in the way that people respond to me. Recently, I went to a restaurant called Joey Tomatoes, wearing my colours, and I overheard a couple at the next table calling me scum and asking to be moved, because they didn't want to sit next to a criminal. I have also been refused as a customer by the Bank of Nova Scotia, and the staff at my local Safeway in Port Coquitlam are not as friendly as they used to be. The mood has gone from casual curiosity to fear, loathing, and avoidance, so much so that I now feel uncomfortable when wearing my Hells Angels insignia. This ruling has effectively declared me to be a member of a criminal organisation, yet why should I suffer just because of the criminal acts committed by some other members?" *(Vancouver Sun, 17/10/06. Spotter: William McIntosh)*


apparently
BY MIKE BARFIELD
AVIAN 'END-OF-YEAR' LETTERS: A SAMPLE
Six eggs this year- even more than 2005! Aren't I clever?
ROUND ROBIN
Once again my tree-sitting skills are in great demand
ROUND PARTRIDGE
Sadly, we are now just 5 geese-a-laying as
ROUND GOOSE
What a busy year! Lots to eat! Looking forward to 2007!
(VERY) ROUND TURKEY

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

VERY UNIMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

(Don't bother to read this I'm sure you've got far more important things to do at this busy time of year)

I had a few spare moments yesterday morning so I invited PC Yates in for a little chat about something that has been bothering him – some silly bee in his police bonnet (!) about me, money, Mr Levy and all that sort of thing. Needless to say I put his mind at rest and he went home happily saying it was an honour to meet me – which I immediately denied! T.B.

VERY IMPORTANT NEWSLETTER

(Read this bit!)

Hullo,

And very happy seasonal greetings to you all, from myself and Cherie!

And isn't this a suitable time to go back and look again at the familiar old Christmas story and think about its relevance to the world we live in today!

So here goes! Turn off your iPod, Rashid, and put that PSP away, Sonali – because I'm going to tell you a modern version of the greatest story ever told!

We all know about the cradle, and the manger and the shepherds. But it's not until you get to the 'wise men' that the story becomes really interesting!

You remember how they went on a long, difficult journey to the Holy Land, following their star?

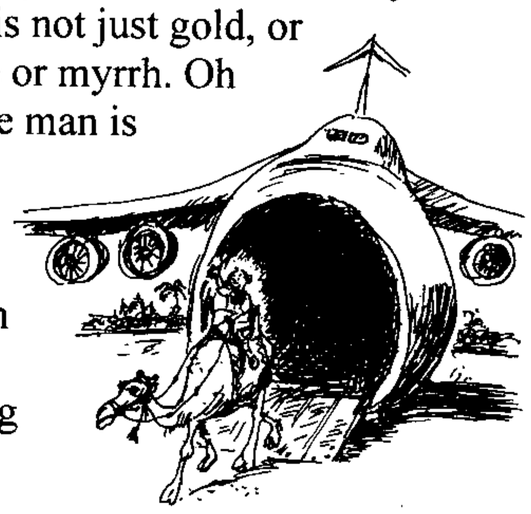
Well, in my version, it's even better than that! There are no longer three wise men, but just one!

And he doesn't come from the East, he comes from the West!

And he doesn't come on a camel. He flies in, in a private jet!

But he's still following his star, his destiny, his mission! Because he's got something very precious to bring, which is going to change the whole of history.

This gift is not just gold, or frankincense or myrrh. Oh no! This wise man is bringing something more valuable than any of those.



He's going to bring himself!

And what do we think his name is? No, Darren, it's not Gandalf! It's not Aslan (though that's a good guess, Asbo!). And it's certainly not 007, Jade!

No, the person I have in mind is someone who in a way is a bit like all of them! And, believe it or not, it's someone who you all know pretty well!

Indeed, he is standing right here in front of you, as I speak! Yes, Chantelle, you've got it. It's me, isn't it? Your very own vicar! It's me that is making that long and very important journey to the Holy Land, and it's probably the most important journey anyone's ever made.

Because the prize, unbelievably, is peace on earth, goodwill to men (and, of course, women). And you can't ask for more than that, can you?

I'd like everyone to think about that for a few minutes in silence. So can we bow our heads and sit or kneel, as you feel more comfortable, and let's have a little prayer, shall we, before I set out on this historic mission?

O Lord Levy, can you please keep away from the Middle East this time and leave it all to the vicar? Amen.

And now it's time for a carol, and what could be more appropriate, with a few minor changes, than that well-loved old song of Christmas...

♪ *"I was born under a wandering star♪*
One wise man from a land afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
A friend of the great Dub-ya"

©Words and music T. Blair.

Yours,

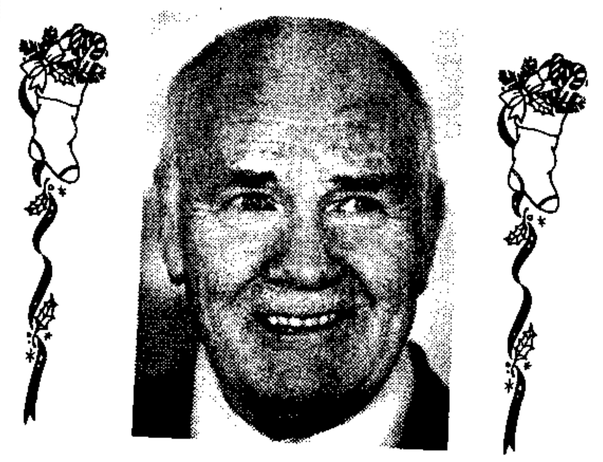
Tony

CHERIE LEADS THE CAROL SINGERS!

And the good news is that they raised £97,000 which luckily just covered her appearance fee!. T.B.

A Seasonal Greetings Card To Everyone In The Parish

A Scary Christmas To You All



From Dr Reid, Head Of Our Neighbourhood Watch

It's Yuletide time, so
please beware
You'll probably not see
in New Year,
I've been told by MI5
That soon most of
you'll not be alive!

Dr Reid

Nude From The Vicarage!

The Perfect Last-Minute Christmas/New Year Gift

This "naughty" charity calendar, specially painted by local artist Harry Dayglo RA, shows some of the parish's leading women (Ms Booth QC) in "the altogether".

All profits from this calendar will go to the Connaught Square Mortgage Appeal (patron the Very Rev. Tony Blair).

Next year we are hoping to persuade other good ladies of the parish to follow the vicar's wife's example for a sequel. Come on Hazel, Tessa, Patricia and Mrs Beckett! Get your kit off and help the needy!

Copies available from our Christmas bookstall at the front of the church (where the altar used to be!).

THE SUN, Friday, December 22, 2006

CAN YOU HELP THE POLICE IN THE SERIAL KILLER CASE?

By Crime Staff **Phil Pages**

WE are asking you the public to rack your brains and tell the police if you have any ideas at *all about what* to call the man responsible for the multiple murders around Ipswich.

So far, the Suffolk constabulary has only come up with one idea – "The Suffolk Strangler". But there are fears that this is inadequate and that officers cannot cope with the pressing demands of the media for a suitably catchy nickname for this evil criminal.

Should it, for example, be "The Ipswich Ripper"? Or "The A14 Attacker" or "The Fat Man In The BMW"?

If you have a clue, please phone the Sun at once and we'll put it on the front page next to lovely Becky, 24, from Swindon posing in her Christmas knickers!

Yes, it's all in your super throwaway Sun!

The Today Programme

Caroline Quinn *(for it is she)*: ...and later in the programme we shall be interviewing a number of sexworkers from the sexworker community about conditions in the sex industry. Should the government be spending more money to guarantee the health and safety of those employed in one of Britain's fastest growing service sectors?

But, first, it's Snort For The Day with the Rt. Rev. Tom Butler-Sloshed, Bishop of Neasden.

Bishop *(for it is he)*: Good evening... you know... at thish time of year... many of ush celebrating the good newsh that they've found another bottle of Irish whishkey out the back... you know... it'sh all very eashy to casht the first shtone... but which one of ush hashn't been to a party at the Irish Embassy and had a bit too much Christmas shpirit... lovely people the Irish... I love them all... one of them told me thish great joke... how did it go?... I never had a head for jokesh... anyway there wash a bishop and an actress... no, hang on, I've got that wrong... there wash jusht thish bishop... where wash I? Oh yesh, in the gutter... anyway, there he wash, being mugged... except that he washn't... he jusht made it up... anyway, none of us is perfect... which brings me to my fourth and final pint... alright, just one for the road... I mean, whatsh it all about, when you come to think about it?... Anyway, a happy Easter to you all.

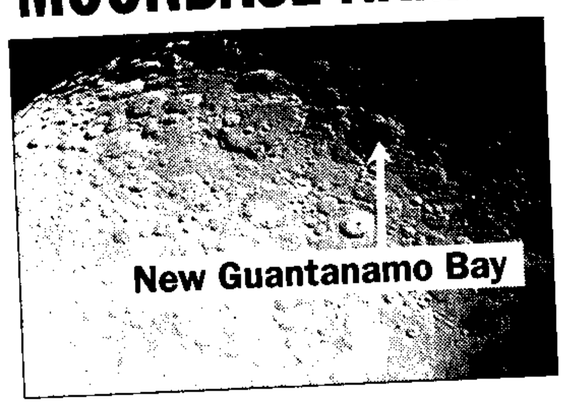
J. Humphrys *(for it is he)*: Thank you, Bishop. Plenty of food for thought there!

Voice of Bishop: No, I can walk home perfectly well on my own, thank you...

(Sound of Bishop falling down BBC stairs)

Humphrys: And just a reminder that tomorrow's the Today programme will be edited by Emma Bunton, better known to some of you perhaps as 'Baby Spice'...

THAT AMERICAN MOONBASE NAMED



THE SEEDY WORLD ON THE FRINGES OF SOCIETY

by Our Twilight World Staff
Janet Street-Walker

Respectable society barely acknowledges their existence and views their activities with contempt.

They have abandoned all the decencies of normal life – home, family and the values that the rest of us live by.

They are the "press workers" (the old-fashioned term "journalist" is no longer used).

They often work at night, taking money from anyone in return for their "services".

Many of them will write anything to fuel their alcohol habit and become trapped in the twilight world of the "redtop district".

A typical example of this misunderstood and frightened community is Les Filth, who would only be identified as a "reporter" on the notorious *Sun* newspaper.

"No one has a good word for us," he sobbed, in a darkened corner of Wapping in London's seedy East End. "But there will always be a need for people like us, to write thousands of words about prostitutes and serial killers to satisfy the public's insatiable appetite for this kind of stuff.

"You may not approve of what we do," he went on defensively, "but I need the money to keep food on the table for my children and drink everywhere else for myself."

Frighteningly, not all press workers come from deprived backgrounds and broken homes.

Some of the highest-paid vice hacks come from respectable middle-class backgrounds and enjoyed the benefits of a university education. They leave their parents and families bewildered and saddened by how far their once promising children have sunk

(cont. p. 94)

ON ALL OTHER PAGES: ● The Ipswich Ripper: A Very Long Psychological Profile by Colin Wilson **3** ● I Blame The Police by Phil Space **4** ● I Blame The Government by Phillippa Page **5** ● I Blame Men by Deirdre Spart **6** ● Why I Say The Government Should Solve The Drug Problem By Handing Out Free Heroin On The NHS by Sir Simon Junkie **7** ● "My Ipswich" by all hacks who live anywhere in East Anglia **8** ● Editors thank Suffolk Ripper for filling up dead news period pre-Christmas **94**

"At least this time of the year, nobody notices us binge drinkers"

MOON NOT MADE OF CHEESE – IT'S OFFICIAL! LORD STEVENS'S LONG-AWAITED REPORT

by Our Crime Staff **Lunchtime O'Brie**

THE longest and most historic enquiry in the history of the police force came to a startling climax today when Lord Stevens of the Yard produced his verdict on the baffling mystery of the exact make-up of the Moon – it isn't cheese!

For the last five years a team of 350 officers led by Inspector Stevens has been sifting through several warehouses full of evidence in a bid to establish once and for all the truth about the Moon mystery.

Diana, Goddess of the Moon

Inspector Stevens and his men have visited seven continents, staying in some of the most luxurious hotels in the world, on their quest for the final clues that would put an end forever to the speculation that has dogged this riddle since 1997.

On a three-month visit to Cape Canaveral, they employed NASA scientists to carry out exhaustive ultra-scans, comparing Moon rock with a series of cheeses, including Lymeswold, Pont d'Alma, Althrop Blue, Gorgonblimey and the Somerset cheese Peregrine Worsthorne.

Lord Stevens himself conducted extensive interviews with top astronaut Buzz Lightyear, who was the second person ever to walk on the Moon's surface.

Mr Lightyear is believed to have told Lord Stevens that, in all his travels through space, he had never seen a white Fiat Uno anywhere in orbit round the Moon.

Furthermore he is believed to have denied categorically that Mr Neil Armstrong, his fellow astronaut, was pregnant at the time of the first Moon landing.

Lunar Tunes

Despite Lord Stevens's findings, superstore magnate Lord Fayed of Knightsbridge last night dismissed the report as yet further evidence of an Establishment cover-up, designed to suppress the truth that the Duke of Edinburgh was the so-called "Man in the Fuggin' Moon".

He was supported by the Dily Express and its billionaire proprietor, Dirty Desmoon, who pledged that his title would be giving away a million tons of genuine Moon-cheese to every reader stupid enough to buy his newspaper.

Report in full: pp 1-94.

NEASDEN CENTRAL POLICE STATION

Office hours: 9-12 Mon-Tues (except Tuesday)

Notice of Arrangements for the Winter Festival Extended Holiday Period

The station will close at 2200 hrs on 19 December 2006, to permit all officers to celebrate the seasonal festivities. It will reopen at 0800 hrs on 20 January 2007.

During this period, members of the public are advised that in the event of an emergency situation they should call the Policedirect line on 0870-99999999 (NB: This is a premium line service based in Bangalore and calls will be charged at £1.10 per second).

In the temporary absence of our officers we shall be placing a number of signs in crime-sensitive locations throughout the district (everywhere). This will warn members of the public that professional members of the criminal community will be operating in their area and that they are therefore likely to be at risk of being burgled, raped or murdered. It is also recommended that they should take advice on precautionary action against such criminal activities by ringing our Policesecure line on 0870-112112. (NB: This is a premium line based in Hyderabad and calls will be charged at the rate of £2.50 per second.)

If any member of the public thinks that he or she has become the victim of a crime during this period, they can access a counselling package from our website www.policegoneaway.co.uk. A podcast version of this package has been recorded by PC Aldgate and can be downloaded onto your laptop (unless of course your laptop has been removed by the crime workers, in which case you should contact your GP).

A Merry "Crime-Mas" To You All from all at Neasden Central Police Station

MoD CLAIMS 'OUR BOYS ARE NOW READY TO FACE ANYTHING'

by Our Man In Iraq **Bazra Bombigboye**

DEFENCE Secretary Des Browne today revealed his new plan to equip every soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan with the very latest innovation in body-armour technology, guaranteed to protect them against any weapon that the insurgents are likely to use against them.

The MoD has acquired, entirely free of charge, millions of unsold copies of David Blunkett's diaries, which tests have shown provides the most effective anti-ballistic padding yet known to mankind.

Each front-line soldier is to be issued with a six-pack of the Blunkett memoirs, which he will deploy around all the vulnerable parts of his body.

Security Blunkett

Said Browne, "We are confident that the new 'Blunk-jacket', as it is already affectionately known to Tommy Atkins, will be enough to stop not just ordinary bullets but mortars, anti-tank missiles and even low-yield nuclear devices."

"But the greatest advantage of all," Mr Browne went on, "is that it is costing the UK taxpayer literally nothing at all to get this security system in place."

Lord Drayson is on holiday.

Nursery Times

December 22, 2006

COCK ROBIN INQUIRY: REPORT NAMES SPARROW AFTER ALL

by **Mother Lunchtime O'Goose**

THE long-running inquiry into the death of the much-loved Cock Robin, universally known as "The People's Redbreast", has confirmed that the bird's death was solely due to the Sparrow.

Hundreds of birds, animals and other creatures were questioned in the course of the investigation, all of which were a-sighing and a-sobbing at the tragic news of poor Cock Robin's demise.

The crucial evidence, however, was provided by the

Fly, who claimed to have been an eyewitness to the tragedy.

He told Nursery Times, "The Sparrow was pissed. He was out of his tree. He could hardly fly."

However, the Sparrow's employer, the notorious Ali Fayed, was quick to *(cont. p. 94)*

HUMPTY DUMPTY IN MYSTERY DEATH FALL

A POPULAR egg Mr Humpty Dumpty yesterday fell to his death from a wall after a late night party went tragically wrong.

All the King's horses and all the King's men are investigating the incident and are interviewing witnesses about the key question – was Pete Doherty involved?

Mr Doherty, the celebrated drug-user and boyfriend of top nurseryland model, Snorting Beauty, was seen in the vicinity of the wall *(cont. p. 94)*

Letter to the Editor

Names of the year

From the Rev. Ebenezer Lockjaw.

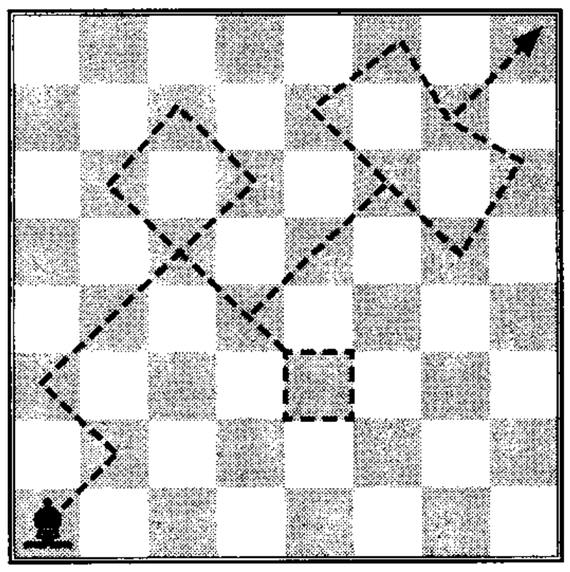
Sir, As is customary at this time of year, I have compiled a list of the most popular names taken from your newspaper's Birth announcements:

	Boys	Girls
1.	Spam	Spamella
2.	Ehud	Niqab
3.	Panesar	Sushi
4.	Polonium	Polonia
5.	Ahmedinajad	Aloe Vera
6.	Bond	Bondella
7.	Grolsch	Stella-Artois
8.	Seroxat	Herceptin
9.	Desert	Orchid
10.	Peregrine Wortshorne	Yasmin-Alibhai-Brown

THE REV. EBENEZER LOCKJAW, The Old Supermarket, St Anna St Airlift, Somerset.

CHESS PUZZLE No. 94

Sponsored by Black & White Whisky



Set by Jaspistasanewto

The Irish Embassy Defence
Does the Bishop fall over before he reaches home (KR8)?

Answer: Yesh

Dear Mrs A Wilson
Do you occasionally have difficulty in obtaining or maintaining an erection? You may have erectile dysfunction, also known as impotence.

Health Naturelle

THE DAILY MARS
ONE ZLOG

Is There Water in the South of England?

BY OUR ASTRONOMY CORRESPONDENT
BZZKLG VXXGRXXYL

AMAZING new pictures taken above the earth seem to indicate that there is indeed water on the parched surfaces of the Home Counties.

Martian scientists have long believed that this region was just a desert, a desolate landscape of cracked earth and dry rock.

However the discovery of water could revolutionise Martian thinking about the possibility of life in the South of England.

"If there is water" said one leading expert, " then this could mean the existence of water companies charging a huge amount of money for the limited supplies."

"This is very exciting news," he said, "particularly for shareholders in Martian Water plc, which intends to take over immediately and bleed the earthlings dry."

ON OTHER PAGES

- *Post Office spotted in Rural area.* **p2**
- *Your Flying Saucers Tonight – Delays Expected – 'Wrong Type of Gravity' claims Spacecoach spokesman.* **p.94**

THE TIMES, Friday, December 22, 2006

Mary Ann Bighead

MODESTY FORBIDS...

It's National Modesty Week and at my daughter Intelligencia's school, St Mensa's, they ran a competition to find the girl who could come up with the cleverest slogan.

The winning entry (which I think you'll agree is very clever indeed!) was penned by an exceptionally clever girl and I knew you would want me to share it with you.

"I'm brilliant at being modest! And so is my Mum!"

Isn't that clever? I couldn't possibly reveal the name of this girl and to spare her blushes I will just refer to her as I.B.

Well done darling!

Mary Ann Bighead.

Editor's choice: Top Christmas Show

Bruges-A-Lot!

(Palace Theatre)

NEW musical lovingly ripped-off from the wartime classic "They Flew to Bruges" (originally starring David Niven as Squadron Leader "Ginger" Squiffington and Richard Attenborough as Pilot Officer "Cowardy" Custard).

All the thrills of a night raid over occupied Belgium set to a musical comedy score that will have you tapping your toes and humming such hits as:

How do you solve a problem like Group Captain "Tubby" Trubshaw?

Somewhere over the Rhine

Sit Down you're Rocking the Lancaster

These are a Few of my Favourite Wings

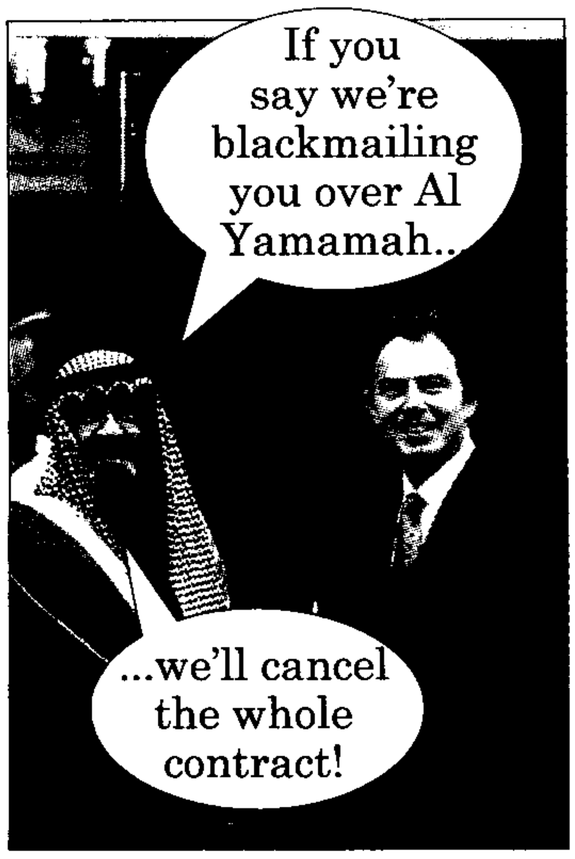
Don't cry for me WAAF Sergeant Hermione "Bunty" Buntington!

...and of course, the immortal

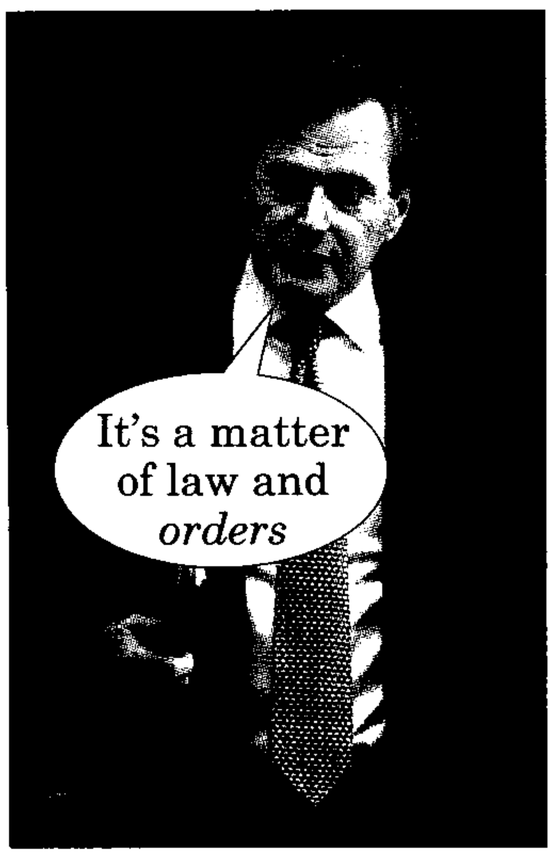
Always Look on the Bright Side of Bruges

A WEEK IN PICTURES

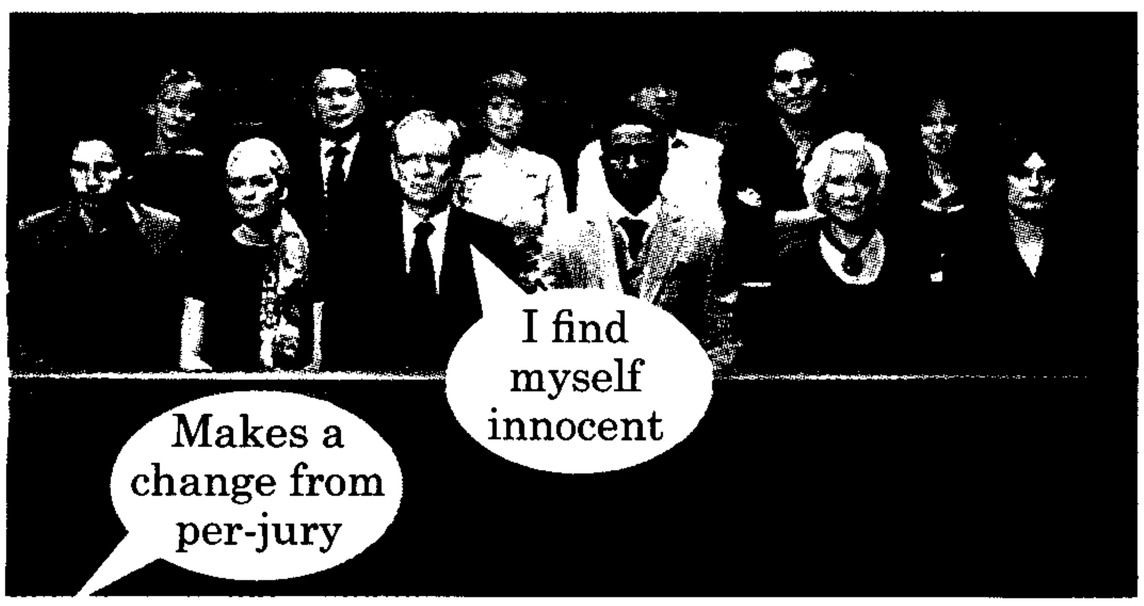
SAUDIS – INVESTIGATION DROPPED



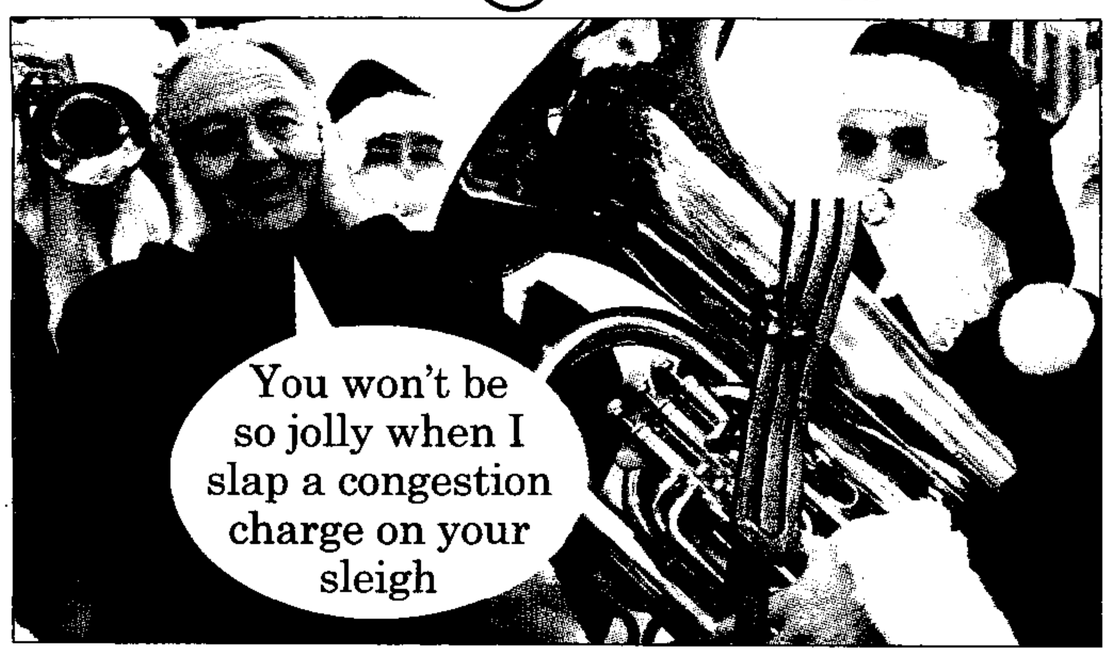
GOLDSMITH EXPLAINS



ARCHER JURY SHOCK



HAPPY ©HRISTMAS



OBESITY CRISIS

DAILY EXPRESS
Friday, 22 December, 2006

WHO KILLED OUR STORY?

by Daily Express Editor **Mohammed al-Desmond**

THE STEVENS Report is a total whitewash which leaves the central question of the Diana mystery unsolved, ie why was our beloved story "The People's Front Page" killed off when it had so much life ahead of it?

The answer is clear. The Royal Family and MI6, led by the Duke of Edinburgh, wanted the story dead and deliberately arranged for Lord Fuggin Stevens to run it over in a fuggin whitewash Fiat Uno in a fuggin *(continued for ever)*

Exclusive to all tabloids

IPSWICH MURDERS LATEST

WILL WE OFFEND AGAIN?

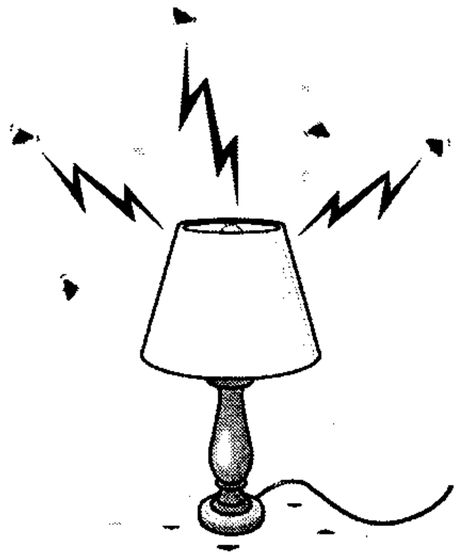
NO ONE can know for certain, but psychological profilers are convinced that we will keep publishing these pictures of dead prostitutes with all the gory details again and again and again and nothing will stop us until... *(cont. p. 94)*

■ *Full story with pix (1-93)*

PRODUCT RECALL

MOTHDOOM

(EC Patent No. 315/B)



IN THE Gnomemart feature in our last issue, we advertised a product known as **Mothdoom**, a bedside lampshade designed in Estonia which gives a lethal 4000 volt electric shock to any moth or other insect which touches it. This was featured under the slogan 'Say Goodbye To Annoying Flapping Moth Misery', and was personally endorsed by TV's Bill Oddie, the world-famous naturalist, who assured prospective customers that the moths would be killed instantly and humanely, in a way which would not damage the environment.

We have now learned that a number of purchasers of this product have unfortunately sustained fatal injury by coming into contact with Mothdoom in the bedroom situation.

Whilst not admitting liability for these regrettable accidents, we have been asked by the DTI to recall this product as a matter of urgency, and to advise anyone who purchased Mothdoom to place it in a lead-lined box and bury it at a depth of 12 metres (minimum) in their garden, awaiting safe disposal by our trained operations team.

We are sorry that on legal advice we are unable to offer any refund.

DIARY

HAROLD PINTER

I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing By

I saw three ships come sailing by
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
I saw three ships come sailing by
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day in the morning?

What the fucking fuck do you think was
in them, then
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
Bombs to blow your fucking head
off, chum.
On Christmas Day in the shitting morning.

Ding Dong Merrily on High

Ding dong merrily on high,
In heav'n the bells are ringing:
Ding dong! verily the sky
Is riv'n with angels singing.
Until their wings are blown clean off
And they're shot out of the fucking sky
And plummet to their deaths.

The Twelve Days Of Christmas

On the first day of Christmas
My true love sent to me:
A partridge in a pear tree.

On the second day of Christmas
My true love sent to me:
Two turtle doves
And a partridge in a pear tree.

On the third day of Christmas
My true love sent to me:
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves
And a partridge in a pear tree.

On the fourth day of Christmas
My true love sent to me:
Four calling birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves
And a partridge in a pear tree.

On the fifth day of Christmas
I told her to fuck the fuck off
And I wanted to know what the fuck
She thought she was fucking doing
Sending me all that fucking shit.

The Holly and the Ivy

The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown
Are converted into weapons to torture
The rest of us.

Jingle Bells

Dashing through the snow
On a one-horse open sleigh,
Over the fields we go,
Scowling all the way;
Bells on bob-tail ring,
Making spirits sink,
O what hell it is to ride and sing
A sleighing song tonight, O!

Jingle bells, jingle bells,
Jingle all the way!
O what fucking point is there in riding
In a one-horse open sleigh
When you know you're being driven
To certain fucking death at the hands
Of George Fucking Bush and his henchman
Mister Tony Fucking Blair?

While Shepherds Watched their Flocks By Night

While shepherds watched
Their flocks by night
All seated on the ground
They were bombed to smithereens and
That wiped the stupid grins off their faces.

Deck the Halls

Deck the halls with boughs of holly
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.
'Tis the season to be jolly
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.
Don we now our gay apparel
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.
Just to have the shit kicked out of our
sodding arses.
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

God rest ye merry, gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Excep you've just
Had the shit blown out of you and you're
Not so fucking merry now, chums.

Good King Wenceslas

Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the Feast of Stephen,
And had his head sliced off
By Bush's bully-boys.

I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus

I saw mommy kissing Santa Claus.
Fucking typical.

The Little Drummer Boy

Come they told me!
pa rum pum pum pum
A new born King to see!
pa rum pum pum pum
Our finest gifts we bring!
pa rum pum pum pum
To lay before the King!
pa rum pum pum pum
rum pum pum pum
rum pum pum pum
What's that noise?
pa rum pum pum pum
Someone stop that sodding din!
pa rum pum pum pum
pa rum pum pum pum
Okay, that's it, Lady Antonia
I've had enough! Get your coat!
I can't take much fucking more of this!
We're leaving this minute!
pa rum pum pum pum
pa rum pum pum pum...

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

WE'RE HAVING A CARBON NEUTRAL FAMILY CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR, AS A PRESENT FOR THE PLANET.
COOL IDEA, GARY.
WE'RE NOT SENDING OUT ANY XMAS CARDS, NOT CHOPPING DOWN ANY CHRISTMAS TREES, NOT BUYING ANY PRESENTS WITH PACKAGING...
WOW, MAN!
THIS CHRISTMAS OUR CARBON EMISSIONS COUNT WILL BE ZERO.
WHICH STOPS DEBS FEELING GUILTY ABOUT US ALL JETTING OFF TO BARBADOS AS PER USUAL...

Literary Review

Pro-celebrity cookbooks

COOKING is the new fucking. All right, all right. Let's just say, cooking is the new foreplay. You don't need to watch Nudge-nudge-ella teasing her hair out of the way and licking her sticky fingers while she demonstrates some routine kitchen procedure to get that message loud and clear. Nor do you need to wince at the oft-repeated profanities of that sacred monster of TV reality, Gordon Ramsay, to maintain the mental connection between refection and reproduction.

The proliferation of large format cookery books may have something to do with our native love of elaborately prepared victuals, but that is certainly not how they are designed to be used. Like pornography, they are really intended to feed our fantasies, and to suggest an experience that is better than the real thing.

Tom Aikens' *Cooking* (Ebury Press, £25) is a case in point. It's beautifully produced, with lots of moody black and white photographs of this restaurateur looking like an existential loner, hunched up in a long black coat, talking on the telephone, in some cases even doing a bit of cooking. "Who else, other than chefs," he wonders, "can create, make and choose so many options and directions?" Who indeed? His recipes may well be interesting and original; some of them may even be feasible in the average domestic kitchen. But the point is academic since the pale grey sans serif text is almost impossible to read. You obviously aren't meant to actually use it, silly. Just dream on.

Heston Blumenthal's *In Search of Perfection* (Bloomsbury, £20) is even more beautifully produced and even less useful as a cookbook. Hester is the turbo-chef who raced to prominence at the Fat Duck restaurant by winning 3 Fat Tyres (sorry, Michelin stars) in record time, and is notorious for his whacky food combinations (snail porridge; egg & bacon ice cream). His attempt to revitalise eight tired old classics, such as Black Forest gâteau, recalls Delia Smith's rather similar attempt, a decade ago, to revitalise such tired old classics as, er, Black Forest gâteau (see Smith's *Winter Collection*, 1995, p222). Even if Heston's recipes were as user-friendly as Delia's, there are still only eight of them, which seems a bit thin for a book of 320 pages, itself the spin-off from a TV series.

At least *Gordon Ramsay's Sunday Lunch: And Other Recipes from the "F Word"* (Quadrille, £19.99) is usable in the sense that the pictures are mostly relevant and the text, though presented in a jumble of different type faces, is otherwise readable. The recipes are aimed at the domestic cook and there is even a DVD of Gordon doing the business. But a good many pages of the book are taken up with manifesto-like slogans, such as, "More than a quarter of people do not find it easy to cook a meal that the whole family will eat", and "Nearly half of all families never sit down for a daily meal together". Do we detect a hint of the Jamie Olivers? A plea for the social benefits of *The F-Word* and his relevance to the national culture? Not so much Strength-Through-Joy as Joy-Through-Stuffing, perhaps.

In her "me too" offering, Tana Ramsay's *Family Kitchen* (Harper Thorsons, £20) Gordon's wife expresses a similar desire for social cohesion round the dining table. "Meal times have become really important in our house," she opines, as though it were the last thing two professional food writers would think about. Tana was trained as a Montessori teacher, but has acquired through marriage to Mr Ramsay the professional expertise to become food editor of *Grazia* magazine and a writer of cook books herself.

"I must admit I hardly cooked until I had children," writes Tana, only adding to our gasps of admiration for her bold attempt to enter this crowded market on the basis of little more than amateur enthusiasm (plus the magic dust of celebrity). But she does look pretty and, as they say, presentation is half the battle. Or if not half at least a third, that being the proportion of her book (89 out of 260 pages) given over to lovely pictures of this caring mum and her various offspring, and sometimes even some food.

As for her recipes, these are neither challenging nor particularly original, merely rather unrealistic. She claims that her recipes are "organised with most people's weekly routines in mind", but few busy parents getting their children off to school in the morning would have time to make her "school run smoothies", which involve washing and peeling and chopping up a whole load of fruit and whizzing it up in a blender, or her wholemeal pancakes (20 minutes prep and cooking time), let alone her homemade baked beans (three hours cooking plus overnight soaking). But no doubt it would be worth the effort: "I feel a sense of relief knowing exactly what is in the snacks I'm giving my children."

TV cook Ainsley Harriott no doubt enjoys both peace of mind and a nicely risen bank balance after foisting his *Feel-Good Cookbook* (BBC Books, £20) on to an unsuspecting public. This claims to contain 150 "brand new" recipes, but there seems nothing particularly new about his duck confit (a standard found in many classic cookbooks) or beef stroganoff with buttered tagliatelle (ditto), and his penne with roasted butternut squash, sage and goats cheese is only a minor variation on a theme of pumpkin similarly combined.

Then again, as Tom Aikens observes, there are so many options and directions to choose with cooking. You really can't expect every single recipe to be brand new. So why pretend they are? Most cookbooks contain a good deal of rehashed old rope and what sells them, of course, is their author's celebrity and their lovely pictures. Thankfully, Harriott has been more generous even than his rivals in the latter regard, devoting 129 of his 240 pages to pictures. So with Ainsley, at least, the old adage is still true, and presentation is more than half the battle.

Another old adage concerns the proof of the pudding. But what these lusciously illustrated fantasies feed is the eyes, not the stomach. To parody Gordon Ramsay, more than three-quarters of all cookbooks given as Christmas presents stay on the shelf after being used once or twice out of curiosity, or left on the kitchen counter underneath a bowl of diminishing nuts and shrinking satsumas. Meanwhile, the domestic goes back to the same old recipes, secure in the knowledge that the ingredients are all to hand and the results are, if entirely predictable, reassuringly edible.

'Cookworm'

Books of the Year Part Two

More Gems from the Log-Roll of Honour

Most blatant log-rolling: Will Self in the *Evening Standard*. Selfie and J.G. Ballard have been decorating each other's paperback jackets for a good decade and a half now, and the latter's *Kingdom Come* was, unsurprisingly, "a worthy addition to this great writer's oeuvre". Will's American chum Rick Moody then got a wave for *The Diviners* ("a rollicking tour de force"), while Ralph Steadman's book about Hunter S. Thompson apparently "eschewed the easy certainties either of hagiography, or vitriol, to provide something far more moving and humanly just". Steadman just happens to illustrate Self's "Psychogeography" column in the *Indendent Magazine*.

Runner-up: "Books by four of my colleagues at Princeton University made a big impact this year..." (Paul Muldoon, *TLS*, who extolled all four and chose nothing else.)

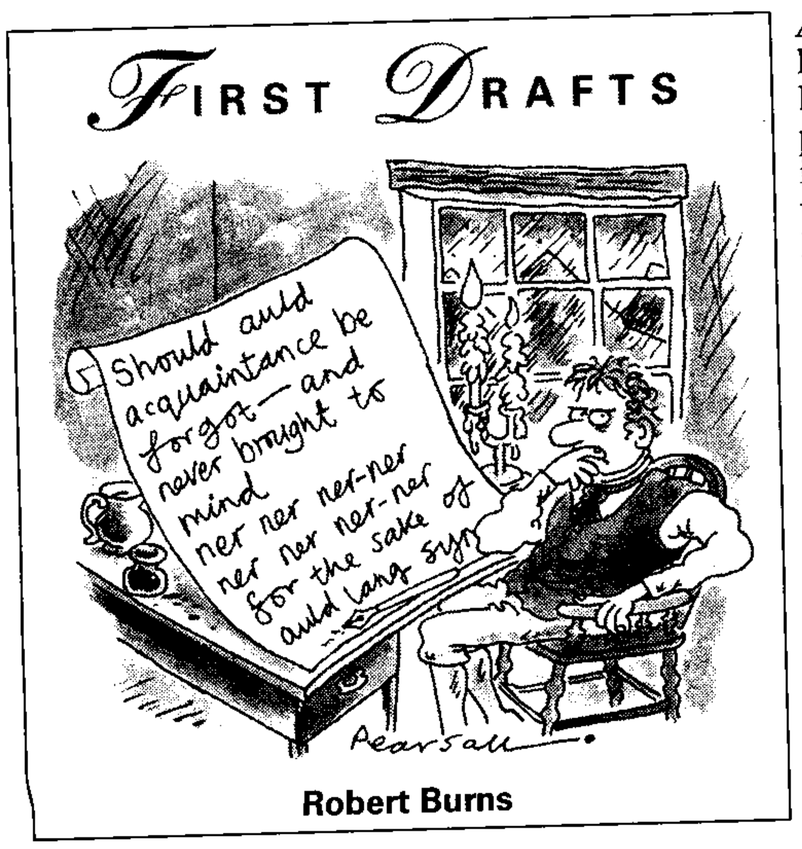
Best transatlantic log-rolling: William Boyd (*Sunday Telegraph*) enthusing about Peter Carey's *Theft: A Love Story*, which few reviewers admired – the novelists have different UK publishers but are Bloomsbury stablemates in the US.

Neatest double puff: "Best of the giving season's non-books (the funnier because it's attached to the heaviest lit-journal we have) is *They Called Me Naughty Lola: The London Review of Books' Personal Ads* (Profile)" (John Sutherland, *Sunday Telegraph* – Sutherland is both a Profile author and an *LRB* reviewer)

Runner-up: D.J. Taylor approved an edition of Graham Greene's writings for the *Tablet*, co-published by the *Tablet*, for whom Taylor coincidentally writes a weekly radio column.

Best puffing publisher: Craig Raine produced an hilarious puff in the *TLS* for a work of criticism in French by his fellow Faber author Milan Kundera ("He is of course the greatest living novelist. But admirers have always known that he is a great critic, a fabulous close reader... He makes love to his chosen texts" etc.

Runner-up: Nadine Gordimer, also in the *TLS*, advertised the merits of Carlos Fuentes' *The Eagle's Throne* and Edward Said's *On Late Style*, both of which just happen to


FIRST DRAFTS
Should auld acquaintance be forgot— and never brought to mind
ner ner ner-ner ner ner ner-ner for the sake of auld lang syn
Pearsall
Robert Burns

be sponsored by her own publishers, Messrs Bloomsbury.

Grumpiest curmudgeon: "I no longer give books to anyone…" (A.L. Kennedy, *Scotsman*)

Runners-up: The *Spectator*'s Lloyd Evans and Digby Anderson, who both sulkily chose second hand purchases – "John Evelyn's *Diary* (Oxfam £1.49)" and "Arthur Mee's *Book of the Flag* (charity shop 60p)" respectively – with Anderson harrumphing that "not buying modern books" is a gesture of protest against "the exhibitionist, vicious culture of this age".

Senior moment award: "I also enjoyed the second edition of Hilda Spear's *Iris Murdoch*, a worthy successor to Peter Conradi's great study… Engagingly, Murdoch titles, including my own favourite *Jackson's Dilemma* – originally just Jackson – can sound like imaginary novels invented by some different novelist, e.g. in *A Dance to the Music of Time*, St John Clark's *Match Me Some Marvel* or Ada Leintwardine's *I Stopped at a Chemist*, successfully filmed as *Sally Goes Shopping…*" (John Bayley, *TLS*)

Most inaccurate sneer: "I was in tears at the end of Ali Smith's *The Accidental*, which won last year's Mann (sic) Booker Prize. You poor judges, I sobbed, if that was the best, what were the losers like?" (Lloyd Evans, *Spectator* – Smith wasn't actually the winner, of course, and Man is spelt with only one 'n'.)

Least disinterested choice: "*Suite Francaise* by Irene Nemirovsky… I am presently adapting this stunning book for the screen." (Ronald Harwood, *Sunday Telegraph*)

Clive James award for obscurest foreign-language selection: Frederic Raphael in the *TLS* delighting in Maurice Sartre's *D'Alexandre a Zenoble* ("a masterpiece of scholarly stamina: its tracking of Alexander the Great's takeover of the Persian Empire leaves no stone unread") and Antoine Blondin's *Mes Petits Papiers* ("a surprisingly durable, bare-knuckled montage of Parisian literary and political infighting").

Runner-up: "For Elias Canetti addicts, such as I have become, *Briefe an Georges* is an unputdownable book. It is the letters between Veza Canetti [the author's wife] and the great genius's consumptive doctor-brother." (AN Wilson, *TLS*)

Quiet rolls the don prize (a category once again completely dominated by Oxford entrants): History prof Timothy Garton Ash chose *The New Faber Book of Love Poems* ("a lovely book") by ex-poetry prof James Fenton, an old pal who dedicated his *A German Requiem* to Garton Ash, "with whom I spent much time in Berlin".

Runner-up: History prof Roy Foster, also in the *TLS*, picking fellow OUP author and *TLS* reviewer Stefan Collini. **Commended**: Craig Raine, puffing Fenton too, and John Bayley, puffing Raine.

The year's most genuinely admired work: Irene Nemirovsky's *Suite Francaise*, its presence on the lists made all the more remarkable by the fact that the author died over sixty years ago: in other words, unlike most of the works mentioned here, its success was achieved entirely on merit.

THE WORST-SELLER LIST

■ THE main topic of conversation at publishers' Christmas lunches was, naturally, turkeys – the most expensive, lovingly reared birds which nevertheless ended up burnt to a frazzle and utterly indigestible.

Did someone mention David Blunkett? With a £400,000 advance from Bloomsbury, a big serialisation and acres of publicity, *The Blunkett Tapes* has sold fewer than 2,000 copies in the two months since publication. No wonder the publisher warned investors on 11 December that profits this year may be 75 per cent lower than expected.

Until the next Harry Potter arrives, Bloomsbury's main hope of salvation is Gary Barlow's memoir *My Take*, which has shifted 50,000 copies so far. Not bad, perhaps, but a long way from recouping the £1 million which Bloomsbury saw fit to pay the chubby boy-band icon.

With massive outlays, merely respectable sales aren't nearly enough: to earn back a million-pound advance, a £20 hardback has to find at least 200,000 buyers. Little, Brown paid £1 million for *Barefoot Soldier* by Johnson Beharry VC; total sales so far are 18,000. Another Little, Brown title, Rupert Everett's *Red Carpets and Other Banana Skins*, has sold 20,000 copies, yet he too pocketed £1 million. Sales of Wayne Rooney's *My Story So Far* are 49,000, but since this is the first product of his £5 million five-book deal with HarperCollins future volumes will have to break all best-selling records to make up the difference.

Still, Rooney hasn't done as badly as England team-mate Ashley "Cashley" Cole, whose whingeing autobiography, *My Defence*, appeared in September but has yet to surface in the *Bookseller* top 50. With 4,000 copies sold it doesn't even feature in the Nielsen BookScan list of the top *five thousand* titles of 2006. For this wretchedly stuffed turkey, Headline paid Cashley £250,000.

Like desperate gamblers, publishers believe that redoubling their ante on celebrity memoirs will win the jackpot – despite all evidence to the contrary. (John Blake paid just £10,000 in 2004 for Katie Price's *Being Jordan*, which went on to sell more than a million.) After Michael Barrymore's "rehabilitation" on *Celebrity Big Brother* this year, Simon & Schuster gleefully shelled out £300,000 for his *Awight Now* – but it turns out that the public haven't rehabilitated him after all, as fewer than 5,000 of them bought it. Current Amazon sales rank: 4,755 and falling.

Barrymore's former housemate Chantelle collected £400,000 from Century for *Living the Dream*. Total sales: under 5,000. (Not that Century will care. They also publish Peter Kay, whose memoir has been selling about 80,000 copies *a week*.) Former *X-Factor* winner Shayne Ward trousered £200,000 from Orion for *My Story*, but by the time it appeared in October his pop career was already floundering. As with Chantelle, total sales are below 5,000. One irate reader felt moved to post this review on the Amazon website, where the book currently languishes at 2,691 in the charts: "Shayne Ward? Who is he? Has he had more than one single in the charts?…This really takes the biscuit, and I find it hard to express my disgust, as rubbish like this prevents genuine authors being published."

But will it prevent publishers from hurling yet more money at evanescent minor celebs? No chance!

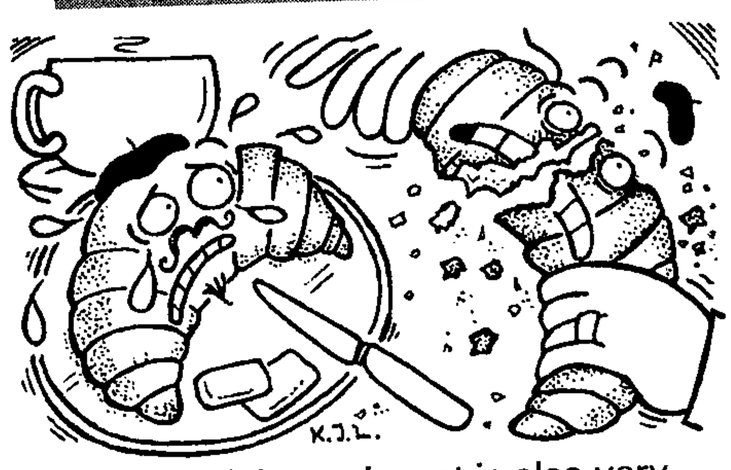
A lot of the retro in Marc's home is borrowed from his parents' house in the Swansea valleys. 'It was a classic Seventies home. Some people would say my parents have no taste but I'm constantly going there and taking things, using them in my art and theatre work.' He did a site-specific piece at a museum in Swansea last year called Tombola Domestica, where he improvised 15 minutes of dance inside a canvas scout tent based on kitchen items chosen by his mother – 'a toy frog, a torch, a nutcracker. It was fantastic.' The piece also involved Marc's father singing Perry Como numbers and the artist performing a semi-erotic carwash of Bonnie Tyler's Daimler. 'My parents have always been a part of my art but I'm not sure they understand it' says Marc.

Artist MARC REES, interviewed in *Observer*

No longer will a spilt packet of sugar sully the reassuring sight of my tea tray. Just decant into this sugar bowl and the aesthetic is restored.

From the box of the sugar bowl included in the 'Nigella Lawson's Living Kitchen' range, Debenhams department stores.

Pseuds Corner



The noise of the croissant is also very important. I can almost hear them shout when people tear them apart.

PIERRE HERME, a.k.a. the 'Picasso of Patisserie', *Independent*

In the first serious literary work on the subject, Nicolas Rouviere's *Asterix ou les lumieres de la civilisation proposes* a much more intellectually ambitious response to the claim of Asterixian chauvinism. Its central postulate is that the stories reject ethnocentrism altogether, and are rooted in the Enlightenment ideal of a common civilisation.

SUDHIR HAZAREESINGH
Times Literary Supplement

Pseuds Corporate

We are pleased to announce that UKDS has been renamed Kalyx. The change has happened simply because our success has led to the name UK Detention Services (UKDS) being too restrictive for us. Since 1987, we have grown to manage four prisons, an immigration removal centre and two post-release approved premises… Kalyx is derived from the botanical term calyx, which is the whorl of leaves, or sepals, forming the protective covering of a flower bud. It is a symbolic representation of protection and care and it can also be associated with growth of the individual and strength – all attributes for which we are known and respected.

From the Kalyx website

CONTRIBUTORS: Dr Felicity James, Stefan Black, Dave Hewie, Daniel Lawrence, Pete Kitching.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

EDS

Fit-up for purpose?

AT LEAST there's one thing that the government's main IT supplier EDS can do properly: make bucket-loads of money out of the taxpayer.

Despite the company's litany of public service catastrophes, the *Eye* can reveal that in just four years up to 2006, EDS bagged £11bn of taxpayers' cash, retaining £2.55bn in pure profit. The fattest cash cow has been the company's long-running relationship with the Department for Work and Pensions, out of which it has screwed £5.15bn and made £1.5bn profit.

In the same period EDS has brought misery to hundreds of thousands of single parents dependent on its failed computer system at the Child Support Agency, which even one of EDS's own managers described as "badly designed, badly delivered, badly tested and badly implemented". It has also screwed up the government's IT-dependent tax credits policy by launching a system on which millions were relying without testing it properly first.

The company's staggering haul emerges from an internal company report on financial performance seen by the *Eye*. It shows just what a ride the large IT consultancy companies are taking the taxpayer for, and why they do everything they can, from sponsoring government events to lining up cushy retirement jobs for senior public servants, to keep the gravy train on track. And along come even more projects whose costs invariably escalate as wily IT consultants find ways to sell more services to credulous civil servants, themselves encouraged by e-crazy New Labour ministers and their advisers recruited straight from the consultancy firms.

Private companies, on the other hand, are not so forthcoming. In the same period, EDS earned £4.3bn from its private sector clients, including Rolls Royce and Vodafone, turning that into a mere £562m profit. That's a 13 percent profit margin against the 23 percent the company makes from the public sector in total, and a whopping 29 percent from its work for the DWP alone. And *despite the CSA fiasco*, last year DWP renewed its mega-contract with EDS, so the lolly can keep rolling in for years to come.

While billions can be lavished on a pisspoor Texan IT company, the budgets from which the cash is found have been pared back so far that thousands of jobs are having to be cut. At DWP a total of 30,000 will go under the government's increasingly laughable "efficiency" programme, with more expected following the Chancellor's latest announcement of further belt-tightening. Almost 500 DWP offices have closed as the department tries to save cash through call centres, supported by an EDS-designed "customer management system" that the Public Accounts Committee last month called "seriously flawed".

Last year the firm also won a ten-year £4bn deal to renew the Ministry of Defence's IT systems, which is already starting to bring in healthy profits. All of which makes the compensation deal negotiated by HM Revenue and Customs earlier this year over the tax credits debacle look pretty derisory. At £71m, of which £24m is payable only when the company wins yet more government contracts, it won't demand too many sacrifices in the company's Dallas boardroom.

Small wonder that the EDS papers reveal its No.1 strategy for the UK – by far its biggest European earner – to be: "Protect government business and expand."

DEFENCE

The armed farces

PREDICTABLY there was much media excitement over the recent Dimbleby Lecture given by Sir Michael Jackson, retired Chief of the General Staff, before a BBC audience of the great and allegedly good. He condemned the Ministry of Defence for sending British soldiers into action in Iraq and Afghanistan hopelessly under-equipped.

The fact that a senior soldier dared to speak out against the government gave the BBC a field day. More junior soldiers, past and present, were quick to ask why the great man had not been so outspoken on their behalf when he was still in charge and able to do something about it.

What went wholly unnoticed, however, was just how intimately Jackson was involved in the two policies that have brought the army to its present dire plight. He was already in charge in 2003 when we arrived in Basra, sharing the general confidence that the army's experience of dealing with Northern Irish terrorists would enable it to deal with any disorder that might arise after hostilities ended.

When British soldiers began to die in insurgent attacks in the months after that glorious "victory", Jackson was party to the fateful decision in October 2003 to send out 100 "Snatch" Land Rovers from Northern Ireland, to enable our troops to patrol Basra and the surrounding countryside. No one at the MoD seemed to realise that Iraq was nothing like Northern Ireland. These vehicles gave no protection against mines and roadside bombs. It was this misjudgement that not only led to the deaths of 26 of our soldiers but played its part in forcing our eventual withdrawal into one or two heavily protected fortresses in and around Basra, abandoning much of the city and south-east Iraq to the militias.

While this disaster unfolded, Jackson's eyes were largely elsewhere. He was playing a key role in assisting the MoD to flesh out Tony Blair's commitment of Britain's armed forces to the future European Rapid Reaction Force. It was for this that Jackson masterminded the army's "restructuring", scrapping or merging scores of old regiments into the "large brigades" required for Britain's eventual planned role in the ERRF. At the same time a huge tranche of our defence budget was being earmarked to equip our armed forces for the same purpose, such as £14bn reserved for FRES (the Future Rapid Effect System), £3.8bn for giant aircraft carriers and much besides (not to mention the £20bn still being swallowed up by the futile Eurofighter project). The reason that our troops have been put in such a vulnerable position in the two war zones where they are now fighting is not that the MoD has lacked the money to supply them with helicopters, mine-protected vehicles and the other equipment needed to fight insurgents and suicide bombers. It is that billions of pounds have been diverted to equip the army to play its part in the EU's fantasy army of the future.

Jackson obliquely acknowledged this in his lecture, when he referred to the difficulty of keeping in with our US allies and our European partners at the same time. But it is the impossibility of bridging those divided loyalties that is bringing our army to the edge of destruction. In the decisions that led to that disaster, Jackson played a central role.

● It's always reassuring to have the best people when bidding for military contracts. Lord Drayson has announced that a consortium called Ascent Consortium was his preferred bidder for a massive £6bn PFI to train pilots for the RAF, Navy and Army for the next twenty-five years. Ascent is made up of Vosper Thornycroft and Lockheed.

Vosper's board includes a former Labour minister, Tessa Blackstone, and a former Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Boyce. Meanwhile Lockheed's UK board includes Sir Anthony Cleaver, currently in charge of all Britain's atomic waste as chairman of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

PENSIONS

Government gamblers

THE mis-selling of pensions looks set to return following the government's pensions White Paper last week – and this time it will be the government doing the mis-selling.

Adopting the proposals from Lord Turner's Commission, pensions secretary John Hutton has promised centrally run "personal accounts" into which employees will be automatically enrolled, with the bulk of the cash placed on the stock market. For millions this will cost money even if the investments pay off, as they will lose many of the means-tested pension benefits they would otherwise be entitled to. The exact number of those affected is disputed, but even Hutton puts it at 10 percent – with mere promises of financial education to limit the numbers being suckered in.

Buried in the small print is the news that the same insurance companies that mis-sold millions of pensions and other financial services in the 1980s and 1990s have been left a way back into the scheme – following intense lobbying – after Turner had initially elbowed them aside. The White Paper raises the prospect of "branded providers", i.e. the usual suspects, selling personal accounts relying on their "existing infrastructure". Not only is their corrupt track record ignored, but the new scheme will also be outside the remit of the financial regulators.

Personal accounts will in fact be little more than an officially organised gamble on the stock market. The enticing returns advertised by Hutton are dependent on the bulk of savers' money being put into shares that generate returns of 3.5 percent above inflation. If they don't, well, tough. Buried away on page 67 of the White Paper is the news that "the risk that investments do not do as well as expected lies with the saver".

And staking the population's future pensions on a rampant stock market is hardly the greatest act of joined-up government either, coming just weeks after the Stern report on the environment. For this scheme to work, share prices – and thus production and consumption – will have to rise exponentially for generations. That's not a pattern ever likely to save the planet.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017 or email strobes@private-eye.co.uk

POLICE

Bug in the system

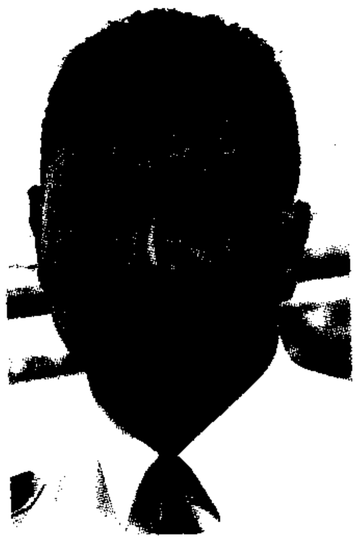
THE debacle surrounding Scotland Yard's £7m pursuit of one of its senior officers, chief superintendent Ali Dizaei (*Eyes passim*) continues.

For the first time in its six-year history, the Investigatory Powers Tribunal, headed by High Court judge Mr Justice Burton, has found that Inspector Knacker acted illegally in bugging Dizaei's telephone calls while investigating him for corruption.

The tribunal has yet to rule on the even more serious allegation that the illicitly gathered material included legally privileged conversations between Dizaei, then legal adviser to the National Black Police Association (NBPA), and officers involved in their own discrimination battles. Transcripts were said to have been passed to the Met's lawyers.

Curiously, on the very day that Mr Justice Burton made his unprecedented ruling, Dizaei was up for promotion to commander for a newly created post with the Association of Chief Police Officers, that of "national co-ordinator for community engagement". The job is "to combat radicalisation" and "promote confidence and reassurance" in the face of the terrorist threat.

Dizaei is a law graduate with a doctorate in law and philosophy who has written and lectured widely on such matters as policing and Islam, the Muslim community and the criminal justice system, and on how policing policies can be wrongly perceived by minority or vulnerable communities. He is also a Muslim and currently in charge of Hounslow, one of the most diverse boroughs in London.



Among those sitting on the promotion board was none other than Andy Hayman, now the head of anti-terrorism at the Met but formerly the man with direct control of "Operation Helios", the botched multi-million pound inquiry into Dizaei.

Eye readers will remember how the massive operation into unfounded claims of drug dealing and espionage spectacularly crashed with Dizaei's acquittal by an Old Bailey jury on what were in any case petty charges: wasting police time and false mileage claims. The operation was criticised at an inquiry which found that race may have played a part. This led to a review of Hayman's anti-corruption squad, while Dizaei himself returned to work with £80,000 compensation.

Given this and the potential for claims of a conflict of interest it seems extraordinary that Hayman didn't excuse himself from the promotional board – even more so given the outcome. The job went to Richard Gargini, borough commander of leafy, affluent Richmond in West London until 2004 when he transferred to Scotland Yard, first in the international crime co-ordination unit and then in service intelligence, apparently investigating Asian gangs. He is also white, middle-aged and middle class.

Dizaei will no doubt be consulting the NBPA about the promotions board and its composition. In the meantime, the ruling by Mr Justice Burton on illegal bugging is highly embarrassing for the Independent Police Complaints Commision (IPPC), which in October dismissed every complaint – nearly 100 in all –it had received from people who were also caught up in the bugging, including Dizaei's parents, his ex-wife, the then Liberian ambassador and members of the NBPA. The IPPC ruled it to be no more than "collateral intrusion" and the "proportionate" and inevitable consequence of the covert operation into Dizaei.

In the light of Mr Justice Burton's ruling, black and Asian officers are to ask the IPPC to look again at their complaints. The 30 cases of alleged racial misconduct brought against police during the time of the bugging may also have to be reviewed.

Watching the watchdog

THE Police watchdog's much-vaunted claims of independence have once again been undermined, this time by the key witness in the scandal surrounding the Stephen Lawrence murder.

Eye readers will remember how Doreen Lawrence, Stephen's mother, complained to the Independent Police Complaints Commission after last summer's BBC documentary, *The Boys Who Killed Stephen Lawrence*, which featured police supergrass Neil Putnam. A bent cop who found Christ, Putnam explained how he had told the "Untouchables" – Scotland Yard's anti-corruption squad – that a detective on the botched murder inquiry had taken money from the father of the chief suspect, David Norris. No action was taken against the officer, Det Sgt John Davidson, and no one from the Lawrence inquiry interviewed Putnam.

Assistant Commissioner John Yates of the Yard told the BBC that Putnam, whose evidence had helped convict five cops, was on this occasion mistaken. There was no cover-up.

Mrs Lawrence reluctantly contacted the IPCC. Reluctantly, because she had previously criticised the IPCC for lacking independence. She was particularly angry that Roy Clark, the boss of the Untouchables during the Lawrence scandal, had become the watchdog's first director of investigations.

Clark has since left, but while there he recruited another former Untouchable, Simon Cousins – one of the four officers that supergrass Putnam said he had spoken to and named to the IPCC.

Putnam says he spoke to Cousins and an intelligence officer about the Lawrence affair over lunch at the Clacketts Lane service station on the M25 in early 2000, after he was freed from jail. Cousins was then head of the witness protection unit charged with looking after the supergrass and his family. Putnam says he asked both officers why the Lawrence inquiry had not come to see him and was told by the intelligence officer to let it go.

Cousins, a senior IPCC investigator for the London area since 2004, is currently investigating the Forest Gate shooting of a young Muslim man which took place last June. He declined to comment on Putnam's claims and referred all questions to the IPCC press office, which would not say whether Cousins himself had told the IPCC about the matter. Instead, in a statement it said: "The IPCC has not yet finished investigating the allegations made in the programme and therefore it would be inappropriate to comment on the questions put about the inquiry. It is well-known that Simon Cousins served in the Metropolitan Police Service before joining the IPCC as a senior investigator and has made a major contribution to our work. He is not part of the IPCC team investigating complaints arising from the programme."

So that's all right then.

PRISONS

Scrubbed up awful

IF THE government believed David Blunkett's resignation had scotched demands for a public inquiry into the scandal at Wormwood Scrubs – where inmates were subjected to beatings, sexual assaults, death threats and mock hangings over nine years – they were mistaken.

The findings of no fewer than four reports, finally obtained by lawyers for the abused inmates, make an even stronger case for a full inquiry into the former regime at the west London jail. They reveal widespread abuse from the early 1990s until 2001 involving a hard core of 164 officers; a culture of drinking on the job, which included junior governor grades; the destruction and falsifying of records and evidence; no-go areas for some staff and managers where the abuse took place; and repeated suggestions that allegations of abuse were brought to the attention of junior governor grades, if not governors, but that little or nothing was done. And attempts to discipline two staff members for abuse and violence were met with resistance. One who was sacked by a governor was reinstated by the Home Office.

Embarrassing questions have now been tabled in Parliament by Lord Ramsbotham, the former chief inspector of prisons. He wants to know whether any of the Scrubs' senior management during its Hell-hole phase have faced disciplinary action, and whether any are still employed by the National Offender Management Service.

Eye readers may remember that the Home Office paid out over £1.8m in compensation over claims for assault and brutality, including rape and sexual assault with implements. Some cases resulted in severe injuries. Events at the Scrubs triggered one of the largest-ever criminal investigations into staff activities at any English jail. Twenty-seven prison officers were charged with attacking inmates; six were initially jailed, but three acquitted on appeal. Most were cleared, but many more, interviewed under caution, were not even charged.

One of the Home Office reports which examined damages claims from inmates spoke of a "prolonged period of staff brutality" which often "approximated to torture, and was of greater gravity than in any British prison, at least over the past 40 years … There has never before been such a concentration of sustained malpractice as illustrated in this review."

Another report into management failings found evidence that many senior and middle managers drank in the staff bar at lunchtime. A third report has a summary of evidence from staff suggesting that officers had a secret code for getting into the club and drinking during shift hours, and suggests that the assaults make have been fuelled by alcohol.

An internal report in 1998, drawn up at the height of the abuse, recognised the problem was not confined to the segregation block, but mistreatment continued. Three months after that internal report was sent to the Home Office, an incident took place during which an inmate was beaten on three consecutive days (his teeth were knocked out in the first attack) as a "punishment" for offering a witness statement in support of another inmate, who had been subjected to mock executions.

No one now disputes that the Scrubs has been turned round and is no longer a Hell-hole. But these reports show that management failures went to the top of the service. Daniel Machover, a lawyer for many of the inmates, said: "These reports confirm what we already knew and reveal more which we did not. Problems were known about at senior management levels and ignored. Worse, there is some suggestion that governor grades participated – not necessarily in the beatings, but in the drinking, macho culture of a prison in meltdown."

In the Back continues overleaf ➜

MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

No appeal

MICHAEL LUVAGLIO, one of two men at the centre of the country's oldest miscarriage of justice claims, a 1967 gangland murder, looks set to die a convicted murderer.

The Criminal Cases Review Commission has just announced it will not send the "one-armed bandit murder" (*Eyes passim*) back to the Court of Appeal. In a move that has stunned lawyers, supporters and MPs of all parties, the CCRC declared the case would "stand no reasonable chance of success".

Luvaglio, who has serious heart problems, may not have time to continue the fight with his co-accused, Dennis Stafford, to clear their names. They were convicted of the execution-style murder of Angus Sibbett, who worked for Luvaglio's brother, Vince Landa, and was found dead in his Jaguar car in South Hetton, Co. Durham, on 5 January 1967.

After a tip-off naming Stafford, the pair were arrested within 18 hours of the discovery of the body – despite having an alibi: both men were miles away in a nightclub in Newcastle, where they were seen by several witnesses.

Police drove at breakneck speed from the nightclub to the murder scene to prove the men could have got there during a crucial half-hour when they had no witnesses. But the cops did it in daylight and good weather, whereas on the night of the killing it was dark, with snow and ice.

The conviction caused so much controversy amongst MPs that it was referred to the Court of Appeal in 1972, to hear evidence from 164 witnesses who were not called at the trial. Some were interviewed by Mr Justice Croom-Johnson, who was to be a judge at the full appeal, but he was taken ill. So the only judge to have heard from witnesses for the defence was not on the Bench when the appeal court threw out the case. Both men were eventually released on licence from their life sentences in 1979, having served 12 years. Luvaglio said: "We were an embarrassment to the Home Office."

The judge's illness was the cornerstone of the pair's submission to the CCRC, and they argued that the evidence of the 164 witnesses was never properly considered. Luvaglio also said that modern DNA and fingerprint testing could find who actually killed Angus Sibbett – fingerprints found in his Jaguar car matched neither Sibbett, Stafford nor Luvaglio. At the trial, it was claimed that these fingerprints were smudged, but among evidence not revealed at the trial Luvaglio discovered a statement from a fingerprint expert, Chief Insp Sams, saying that some of the fingerprints were clear enough for identification purposes. Luvaglio also found statements indicating that Sibbett might have been shot later than claimed.

Luvaglio hoped that DNA might also help find the killer, but it seems that all the forensic evidence in the case – formerly held at the Northern Forensic Science Laboratory – has been destroyed.

Stafford's CCRC application concentrated on the conduct of the original trial judge, Mr Justice O'Connor, whose summing up, he believes, switched the odds in favour of a conviction. Mr Justice O'Connor said the gaming machine trade in which the pair were employed was distasteful. Of the fact that the dead man was a friend of Luvaglio's, the judge told the jury that Brutus had stabbed his friend Caesar, and Judas had betrayed Christ.

Such a summing up would not be allowed today. The Court of Appeal has ruled that the safety of verdicts must be judged by today's standards. But none of this has apparently impressed the CCRC, which seems increasingly reluctant to entertain even very strong cases of a miscarriage of justice. A spokesman said: "The simple fact is that we didn't find any new evidence which gave rise to the 'real possibility' of the convictions being quashed."

But then, with most of the evidence destroyed, how could they find anything new? The CCRC has set up an impossible hurdle while ignoring the existing flaws in the evidence and the judge's summing up.

See, mummy and daddy didn't forget your Christmas presi
How the hell did you get that on Christmas day?
Some kid trying out his present down the street
HUSBAND

In the City

THE SUDDEN decision of the attorney-general, Lord Goldsmith, on instruction from his boss, the prime minister, to bow to Saudi pressure and drop the serious farce office investigation into BAe Systems' dealings with one of the world's most corrupt regimes makes a mockery of Tony Blair's announcement in June of a clampdown on bribery by British companies abroad.

The more meaningful message sent by the Saudi climb-down is simple – if you are a corrupt politician in a rich political ally who is a source of big contracts then you have nothing to fear. "National security" or "highest priority foreign policy objectives" will protect the bribes or kickbacks in your Swiss or offshore bank account.

Within weeks, since the Saudis began applying pressure, the British government has completely caved in to crude blackmail – "stop the SFO investigation or the £10bn Eurofighter deal gets it". The strong impression from within the SFO is that Goldsmith pulled rank and instructed the case to be dropped "in the wider public interest".

Certainly there had been little sign until the announcement of any lack of will by the SFO to proceed. The unexplained "serious obstacles" to a successful prosecution blamed by Goldsmith – but unmentioned by the SFO in its statement – had not deterred the investigation to date.

SFO investigators have been actively pursuing the evidential trail for two years. There was confidence that a prosecution would result – but probably not for up to two years. Foreign corruption cases are always inherently difficult because it is almost certain that the foreign beneficiaries will not be available as defendants because of their influence and protection at home. Still, SFO insiders were confident that a case would result, even if the Saudis themselves escaped due to their lack of co-operation and the inability to extradite. Charges of corruption, money laundering or false accounting were seen as feasible against several BAe-linked individuals in Britain.

A case without any Saudi defendants would have been *Hamlet* without the prince – even if he had been mentioned regularly during the trial. So there was little choice but to at least follow the money trail to its Saudi end.

But, as forecast last September in *Eye* 1166, after the Eurofighter contract was first announced, it proved the card that trumped the SFO:

"The new Eurofighter contract is expected to increase the pressure from a never keen Ministry of Defence, not to mention the Foreign Office, about the risk of embarrassing such a good customer by making allegations that Saudi princelings are corrupt...

"Saudi Arabia is not just a big British customer for weapons systems. It is also a vital ally in the war on terror. So a BAe linked prosecution may not be exactly welcomed in Whitehall or Downing Street. And even less so after the latest $10bn deal."

While Goldsmith's defenders point to the time already taken and the jobs impact of a protracted investigation with no certainty as to the outcome, the real evidence was always going to take time to compile – certainly against the Saudi beneficiaries. For that relied on cracking the Swiss banks. And that was something the Saudis could not risk.

Successive British governments have known since the oil boom and related arms sales of the Seventies that the Saudi royal family is both greedy and corrupt. The long-time Saudi defence minister Prince Sultan, involved in deciding the big arms contracts such as those awarded to BAe, had, in the words of a former British ambassador, "a corrupt interest in all contracts".

The Saudis always deny such allegations.

Companies like BAe and their French rivals do not actually pay bribes to the Saudi kleptocracy. They simply agree to inflate the value of the contract to be paid by the Saudis – by £600m in the case of the original 1985 Al-Yamamah contract under investigation by the SFO – and the royals skim that excess off the top via commissions paid to their bagmen – usually local agents.

The original Al-Yamamah contract was unlikely to form part of any SFO case because the kickbacks happened before they became illegal under British law in 2002. Any charges would probably have had to be limited to payments made since then as the contract continued. BAe has always insisted it did nothing wrong.

It was the SFO's moves to access Swiss bank accounts linked to Syrian middleman Wafic Said and those of another Lebanese agent, Mohammad Safadi (neither man was an SFO target but both are close to the Sultan family), which propelled the Saudis into threatening to replace the proposed Eurofighter successor contract to Al-Yamamah with a French alternative.

While the SFO investigation was merely in the

"I do believe Jesus is our saviour, Rawsthorne"

UK foothills pursuing the alleged £60m "slush fund" used to meet, greet and pamper well-connected Saudis (and other customers) the Saudi embarrassment was containable.

But once the action moved to Switzerland then it was a different game, even though actually getting access to the Said and Safadi bank accounts could have taken years given the Swiss legal system and the appeal options. Those accounts could have shown money passing on to Saudi royals.

Obtaining such dynamite data from Switzerland is always difficult and can be time consuming. Part of the Guinness inquiry regarding secret payments to Ephraim Margulies ran into a legal snowstorm in the Swiss courts and died there. The Indian investigation into the allegations of payments made by the Swedish arms group Bofors to the Hinduja brothers also took years to produce the requested bank information, and the prosecution still failed.

But the Saudi royals could not afford to take the chance that the Swiss (now keen to be seen as squeaky clean) might be as hyper-active as they have been with that other great friend of Tony and GWB as well as BAe – the elected dictator of Kazakhstan, President Nazarbayev. They promptly froze and handed over to American prosecutors details of $60m contained in local bank accounts linked to Nazarbayev and friends. The Americans then used this evidence to indict Nazarbayev's bagman with the oil companies, James Giffen.

The Giffen trial is due to start in February, much to the discomfort of both Nazarbayev and the US government. But despite the strategic significance in Central Asia of Kazakhstan and its oil/gas reserves– Nazarbayev has been in Washington in recent months – even Bush did not prevent Giffen's prosecution.

The Kazakhs have been putting great pressure on Washington to halt the trial. This has been resisted – so far. However, there is evidence of interference for reasons of geopolitics not "the rule of law" as the attorney-general would say. Nazarbayev was not initially named as Giffen's "client". The State Department is continuing to resist Giffen's attempts to force the disclosure of sensitive documents about US dealings with Nazarbayev and their knowledge of Giffen's role. The government is appealing the trial judge's ruling that these documents should be disclosed.

This legal battle and the behind-the-scenes manoeuvrings to negotiate a possible plea bargain that would save everybody's face – but particularly Nazarbayev's – explains why the trial has taken almost four years to come to court. But unlike with Blair and Goldsmith, Bush has not prevented the prosecution of his Muslim ally "in the wider public interest".

But then the US has had a law banning the corruption of foreign officials or politicians for 30 years. During that time it has brought many prosecutions, including against American defence contractors for the bribes they paid in the Seventies to Saudi royals. There have also been prosecutions of those who paid bribes to officials in other Arab allies such as Egypt.

Britain, for all Blair and Labour's rhetoric, has never been keen on banning bribes to get overseas business. Britain had to be harried into signing up for the OECD anti-bribery convention and passing the overseas bribery ban, which came into effect only four years ago. No prosecution has yet been brought under that law. The government has still not brought forward a promised new corruption law.

In theory the SFO could still bring a prosecution against BAe for other suspect contracts, especially in South Africa or maybe more likely Chile, the Czech Republic, Romania or Tanzania. South Africa, like Saudi Arabia, would be another case where Goldsmith might have to play the "foreign policy" or "wider public interest" card. The huge commissions paid on the South African contracts – £1.6bn for Hawk aircraft in 2001 – went via local and British bagmen to figures close to the Mbeki government and possibly also into the ruling ANC party's funds. Britain would not want to alienate South Africa. So the whole BAe investigation looks like ending with not a bang but a whimper.

Similarly, how much enthusiasm will there be for a prosecution over the more than $170m in bribes paid to Nigerian officials by the British joint venture that involved Halliburton at the time it was headed by US vice-president Dick Cheney? These payments handled by London lawyer Jeffrey Tesler are under investigation by the SFO.

The role of Lord Goldsmith in protecting the corrupt Saudi royals at Blair's bidding does nothing to convince that he will do the right thing when it comes to advising on the "loans for peerages" investigation and whether the prime minister, or more likely Lord "Cashpoint" Levy, former party treasurer Matt Carter and assorted millionaire donors should be charged. No doubt he would once again explain how "it has been necessary to balance the need to maintain the rule of law against the wider public interest" – by doing nothing.

THE phony pharaoh Mohamed Fayed – that champion of transparency and truth – has so far failed to file the 2006 accounts for his parent company, Harrods Holdings, which has reportedly paid him and his family a £72m offshore dividend this year.

The accounts to end January were due by 30 November. Companies House says the accounts were received in November but rejected, and must be refiled. No reason was given for the rejection.

This is particularly curious as the accounts for the all-important Harrods store, though filed on 29 November, had in fact been signed off more than four months before, on 21 July, but have been withheld from publication until now.

As in past years, Harrods has not been a roaring retail success. Sales were up just over 2 percent while operating profits were unchanged and the increase in net profits was largely due to property sales and lower interest charges. Shoe business Kurt Geiger went for £46m (which would have helped pay the dividend) and there were property sales of £13m. Some of this cash went to reduce the bank loan to £340m.

Meanwhile the closed Harrods pension fund shows an increased deficit of £107m and Fayed has kindly agreed to put in £9m a year for ten years. Merry Christmas!

THE Big Four beancounters are celebrating their success in lobbying to have their liabilities for failing to spot or stop fraud or bad accounting limited in the new Companies Act. But they sometimes show less enthusiasm for owning up, even when they are clearly to blame.

Take the recent £1.5m fine imposed by the profession's Joint Disciplinary Scheme on PricewaterhouseCoopers over its manifest failings at TransTec, which crashed in 1999. PwC was castigated by the Department of Timidity and Inaction in a 2003 report, but made no rush to settle with the JDS. Nor did it rush to admit its mistakes after the end of the TransTec prosecution last April and the disqualification of all its clients – the TransTec directors. Instead it waited until the weekend before the October tribunal at which the evidence was to be presented, before settling for the second biggest penalty so far imposed by the JDS. In the meantime PwC could continue arguing that only itself and the other Big Four firms could really be trusted with adding up the numbers for major companies. Justice delayed is always a result for the guilty.

'Slicker'

THE DIRECTORS

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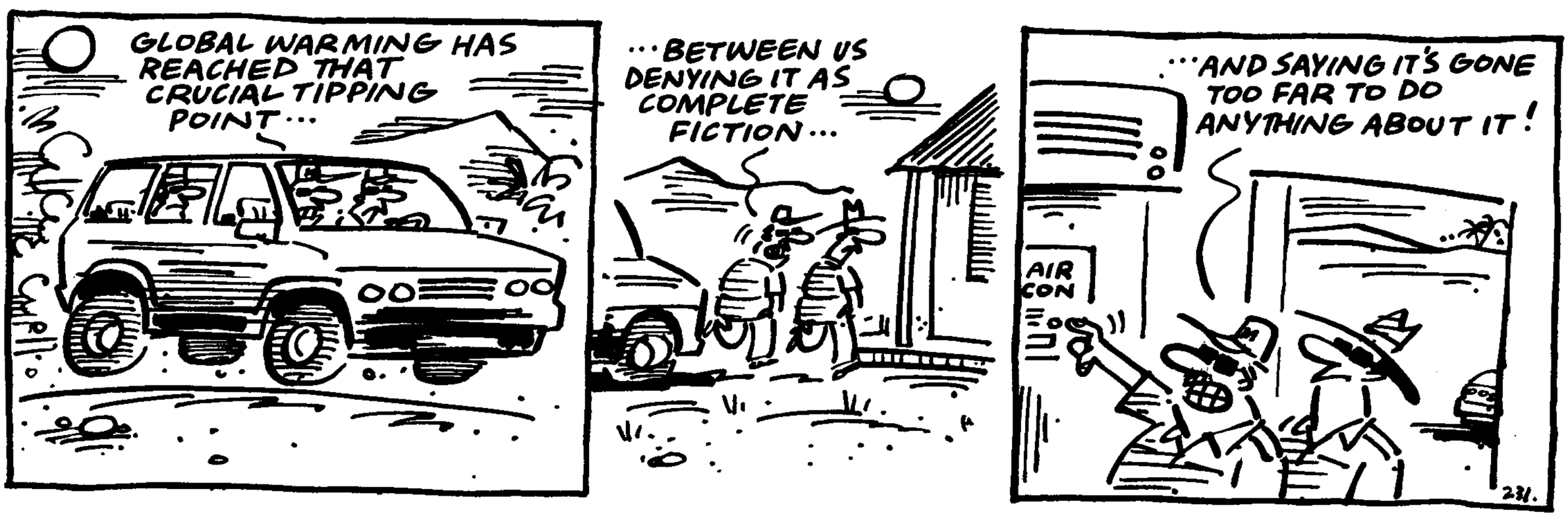
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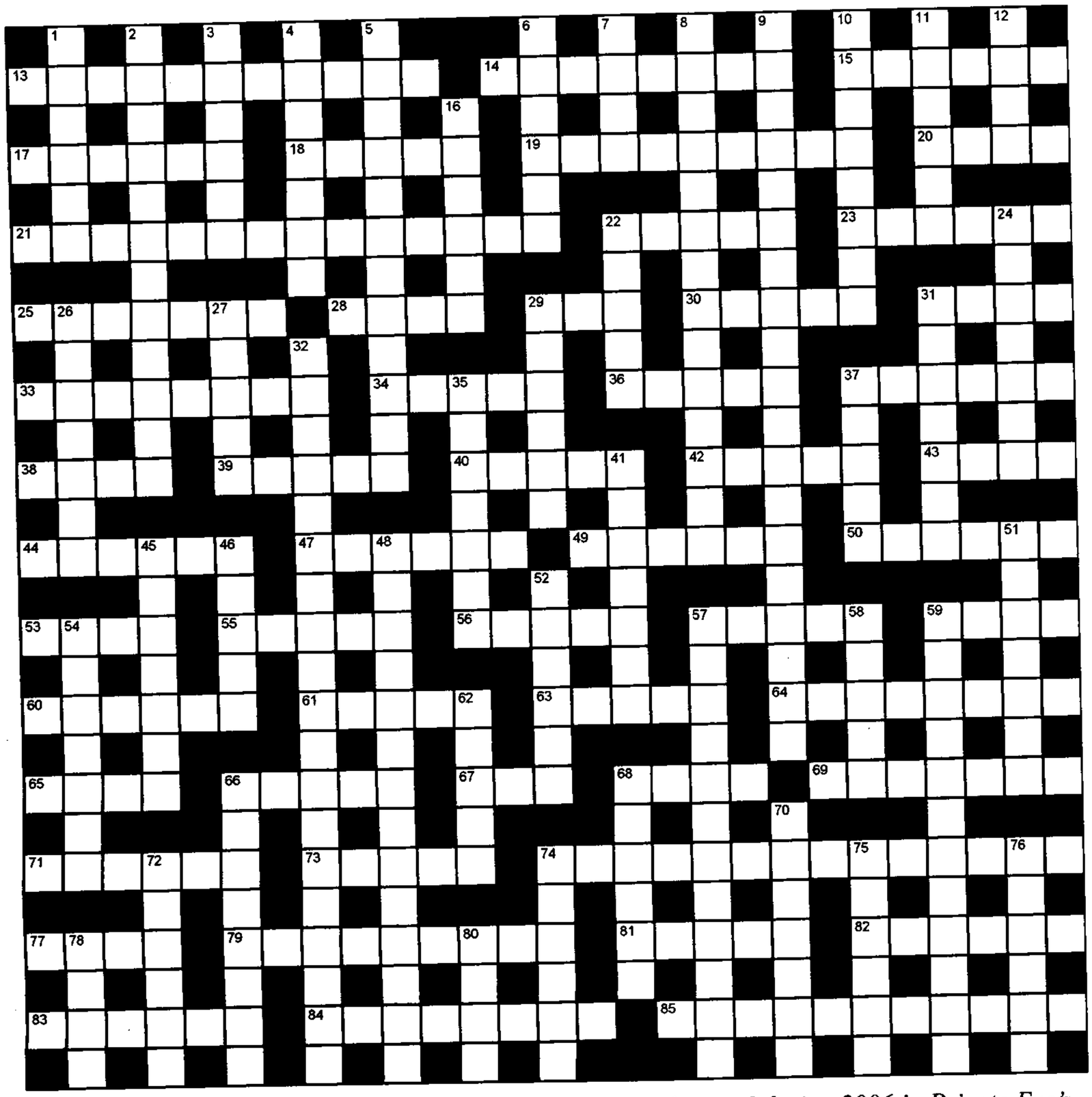

Asterisked clues are questions put to quiz contestants, as featured during 2006 in Private Eye's "Dumb Britain" (some questions have been edited for space purposes). The entry to be made in the grid is the dumb answer made by the contestant.

The 14 answers concerned are made up of the following letters: A A A A A A A A A A B B B B B C C C C C C C D D D E E E E E E E E E E F H H H H H I I I I I I I I I K K K L L L L L L M M M M N N N N N N N N O O O O O O O O O O O P R R R R R R R R S S S S S S S S S T T T T T U U U U U Y Y Y

ACROSS

13 * Who is the Chief Rabbi in the UK? (6,5)
14 Hugh Grant type, he too roughly embraces one after S and M (8)
15 One test of public opinion touches Brown's heart – God! (6)
17 Press's minimal coverage about Blair's end (6)
18 Harry's women mounted on vehicle, topless (5)
19 From whence Jimmy Carter spouted he ballsed up (4,5)
20/70 * What did Napoleon say on his death bed? (4,2,5)
21 Don't let down, as 'going sometime in 2007' Blair would do with Brown? (4,2,8)
22 Nuts of abstainer crushed by horse (5)
23 What's the point of a tit having a new starter drink (6)
25 * What was the first name of Mr Birdseye, the frozen food inventor? (7)
28 A bit of corset, for instance, squeezing bottom of tit (4)
29 Screwed but some gas used (3)
30 Rogue doesn't start to show boner (5)
31 * Who was the youngest Beatle? (4)
33 Superficial type needs to discharge externally (4,4)
34/54 * Who resigned from the Spectator to concentrate on his political career? (5,7)
36 Wives want hard member with internal energy (5)
37 Grab, but go off without tossing Dan (6)
38 Royal, pissed, drops outside recording (4)
39 Ready, sordidly, to be part of Lulu creation (5)
40 See 81ac.
42 Girl graduate stalking Stone (5)
43 See 77ac.
44 Arsehole, etc. pickled and steeped in alcohol (6)
47 Check arse moves about right on model (6)
49 Stage act appearing to titillate (4,2)
50 Get naked sex? Hope abandoned (not hard) (6)
53 Ditch girl-friend in a derogatory way (4)
55 Lover-boy loses heart, as he would do on having an erection? (5)
56 Nation back in clutches of top centre-right party (5)
57 Curious type, a toady when following Brown (5)
59 * In the poem what "springs eternal in the human breast"? (4)
60 Premier's first step is to make a promise (6)
61 Fiddled with manly TV host (5)
63 Cyril's crap words (5)
64 My arse is beaten as a state agent (8)
65 Quote from Alexei Sayle's "F**k me!" (1,3)
66 Blair's first to abandon arse-about slogan (5)
67 See 78dn.
68/7 Member's sort of humour? (4,4)
69 * Who wrote *Lady Chatterley's Lover*? (7)
71 Fanny's weightlifting technique (6)
73 Award that's a vehicle for gross people? (5)
74 Financial fiasco – see Bush about to collapse (injection of pound rejected) (5,3,6)
77/43 * What word for an ancient Roman market-place is used for an internet discussion site? (4,4)
79 From whom luvvies get their fancy habits? (9)
81/40 * What force of nature keeps the planets in orbit round the sun? (5,5)
82 Article cherished by knockers of great intellects (6)
83 Lewinsky, under Clinton, said "one after another" (6)
84 Bloke, into satire, secures Thatcher role (4,4)
85 Reaction to verbal clanger, describing life of one with nothing to spare (4-2-5)

DOWN

1 Fruity thing, the bloke covered by parasites (6)
2 Bungling politician in "EEC not nice" outburst (12)
3 No, slag off the political battle-cry, say (6)
4 Dart from this to give oral sex to Pistol? (7)
5 Unprincipled Blair used PTE deviously (12)
6 Start to spill dirt over, say, *Blur* (6)
7 See 68ac.
8 Go after the like of Mrs Thatcher and snort "shit!" (5,3,6)
9 Labour's top gaffer? Yes and not quite! (6,5,8)
10 Piss-taker Thatcher bashed with elbow not hand-bag, initially (8)
11 Boob made by member having got to his feet? (4-2)
12 After lunch manual stimulation tops for relief (4)
16 Deny being pissed in outskirts of Saxony city (6)
22 * What was the last thing left in Pandora's box? (5)
24 Long John Silver, though loo-less, having a ball in olden times (4,3)
26 Sideways political party doused in crappy sake (7)
27 Fancy Blair's no. 2 being a model (5)
29 Eatery that ruined Boris Yeltsin's heart (6)
31 Incompetent spin user's nightmare (3,4)
32 Peculiar sexual intercourse cool, as supposedly enjoyed by Bush/Blair? (7,12)
35 Withering earful about "Society", as UK often got from de Gaulle? (7)
37 * The "King of the Cowboys" was Roy who? (5)
41 Drug copper and love endless state (7)
45 * On what day did God create Earth? (7)
46 Length Tom started to slip inside, just (5)
48 * Who wrote *Treasure Island*? (8,6)
51 Left gripped by special need to spend, spend, spend? (7)
52 The blue party: it came back down to earth in 1979 (6)
54 See 34ac.
57 Choleric pain treatment for one with unresponsive sex partner (12)
58 Beeb man wants sex, the woman mounting, outside (5)
59 Frigging Martin Amis, nothing but crap – I'm off (12)
62 PM, once hurt, cuddles the little woman (5)
66 * TV comedy about pensioners is called "Last of the" what? (8)
68 Ex-president, one involved in UK uprising and disruption (6)
70 See 20ac.
72 *Punch*, *Today*, etc. – bust on getting the foreign input (6)
74 Acts like panicky Ollie North, taking dumps around Reagan's no. 1 (6)
75 William's character? A complete arse (6)
76 How long it is, Glen! Operated on, on Thurs? (6)
78/67 Palm someone off with this? (4,3)
80 Cyclops would, up the Castilian Eric (4)

£250 prize to first solution opened on 29.12.06. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. Or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

Solution to Crossword No. 328

Winner: A. RUSSELL

ACROSS: 5/12/14/16/20D/22 Never let the truth get in the way of a good story 10 Apeman 11 Voice box 15 Statute 17 Get down 20 Abeam 21 Hard sell 23 Bonar Law 24 Snotty 25/7 Drop dead 26 Wild-eyed.

DOWN: 1 Snapshot 2 Iran 3 Heave-ho 4 Defected 6 Vomit 8 Drown 9 King Lear 13 Untimely 18 Well-to-do 19 Showbiz 24 Side.

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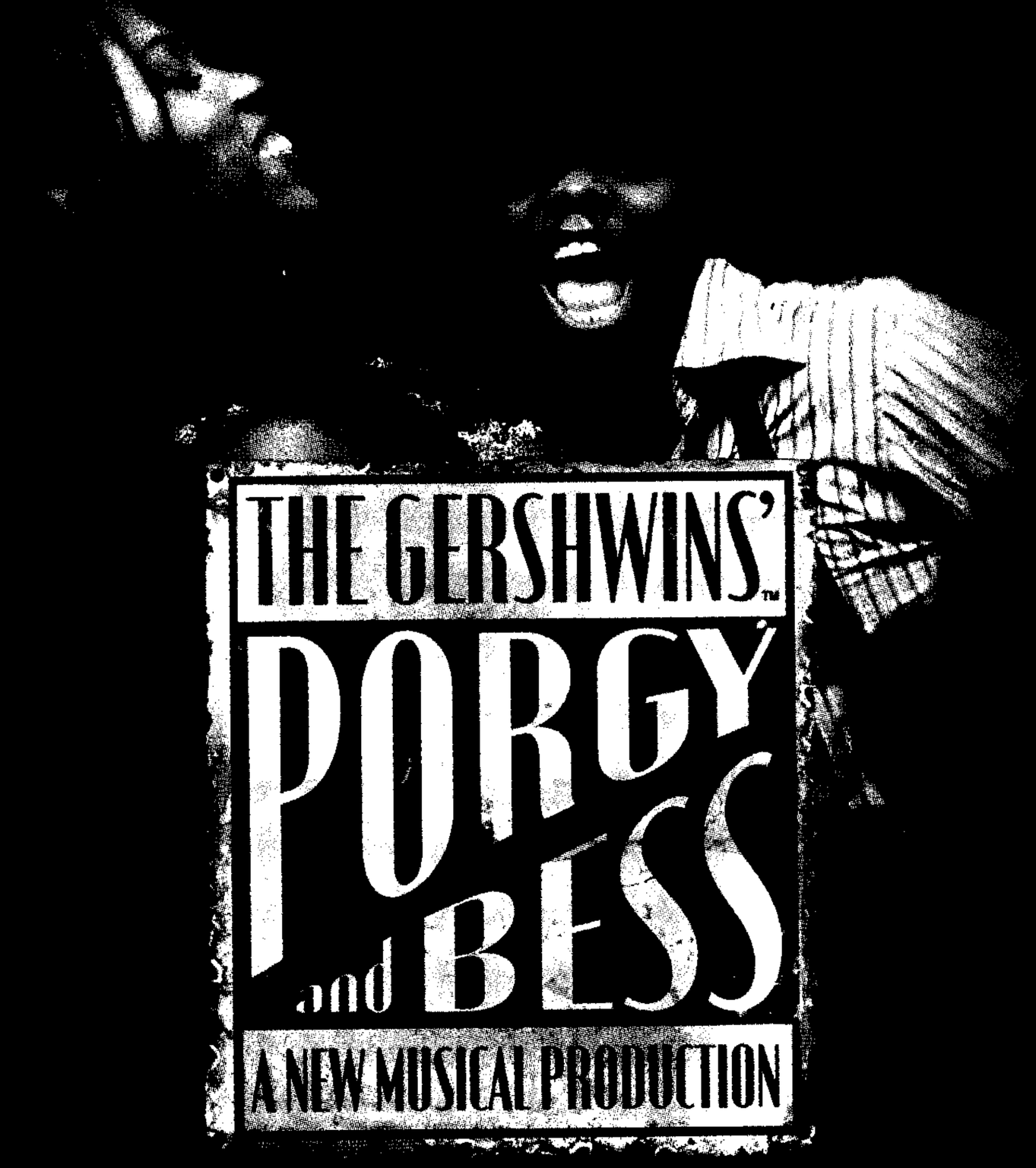

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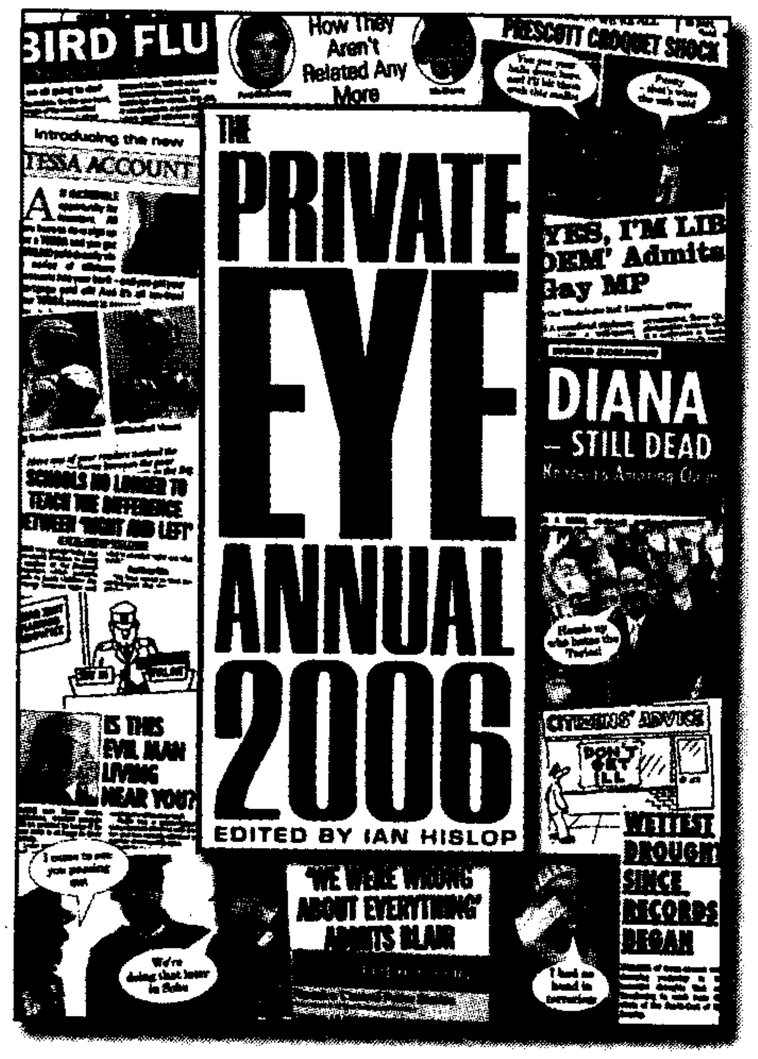
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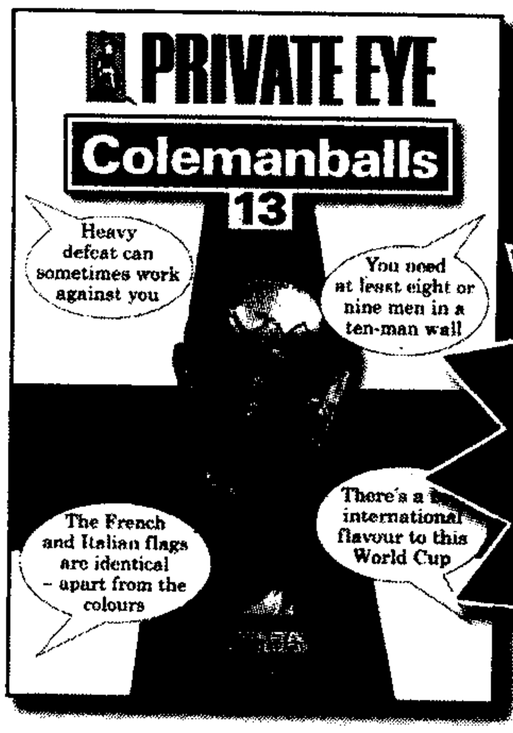
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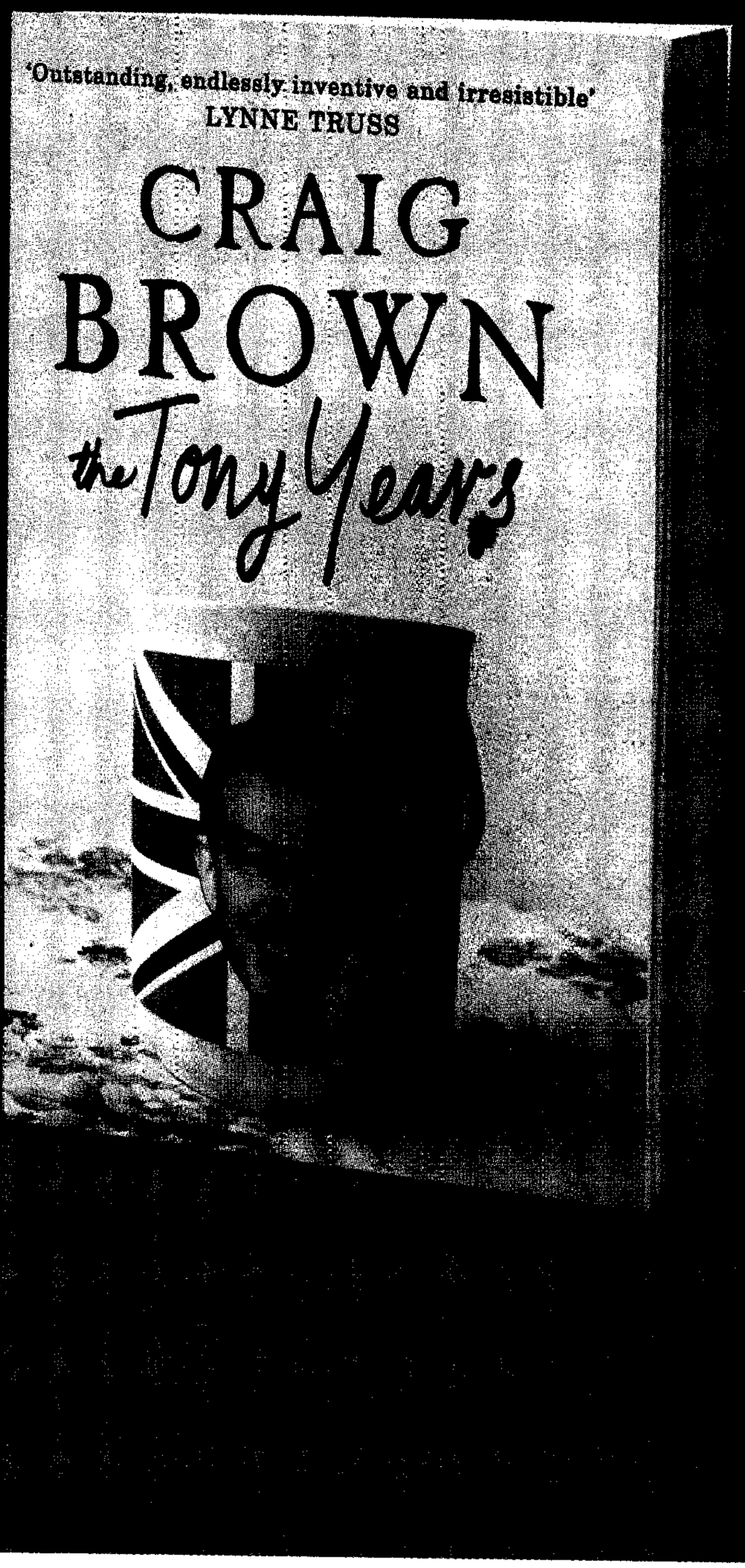

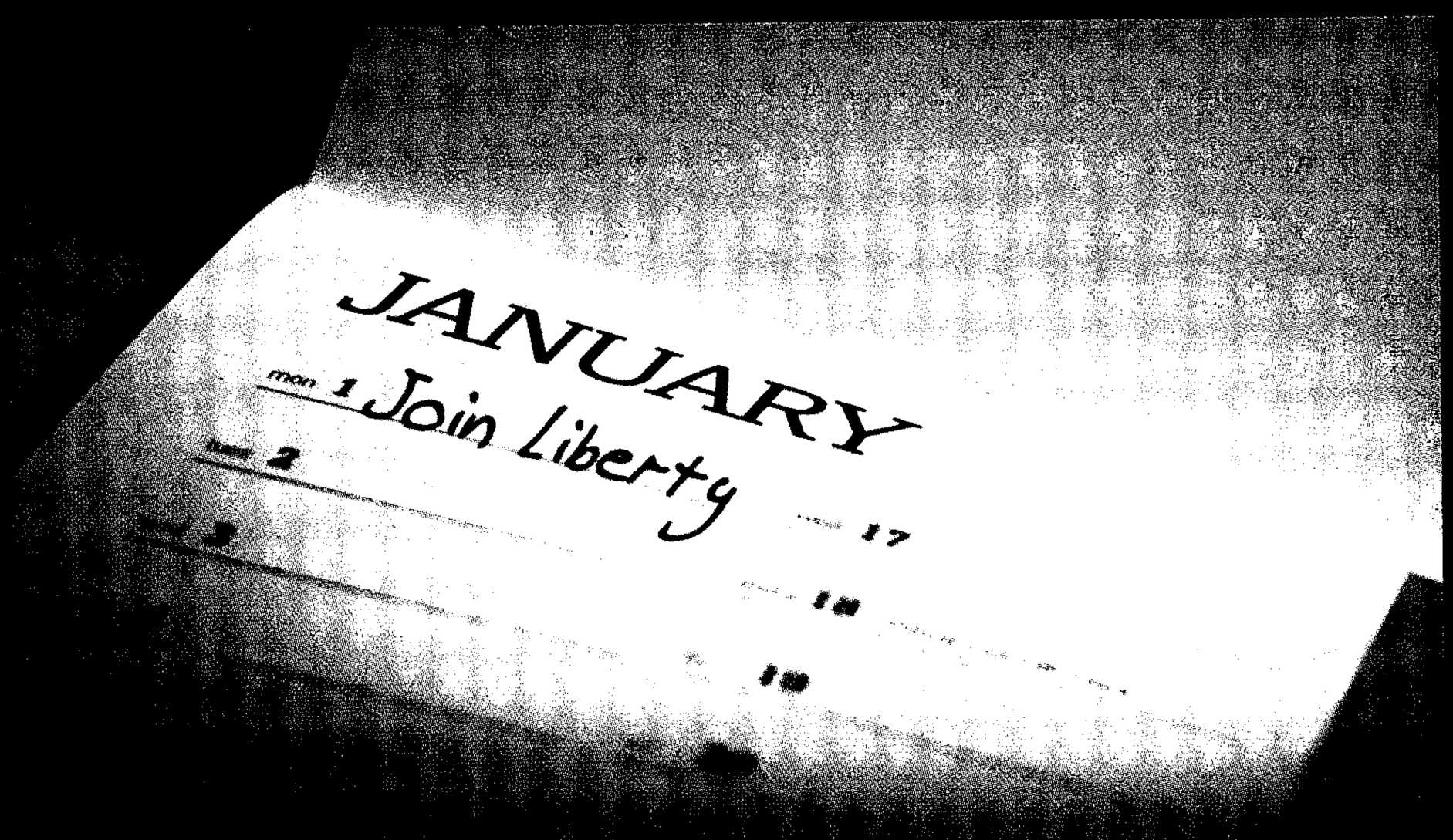

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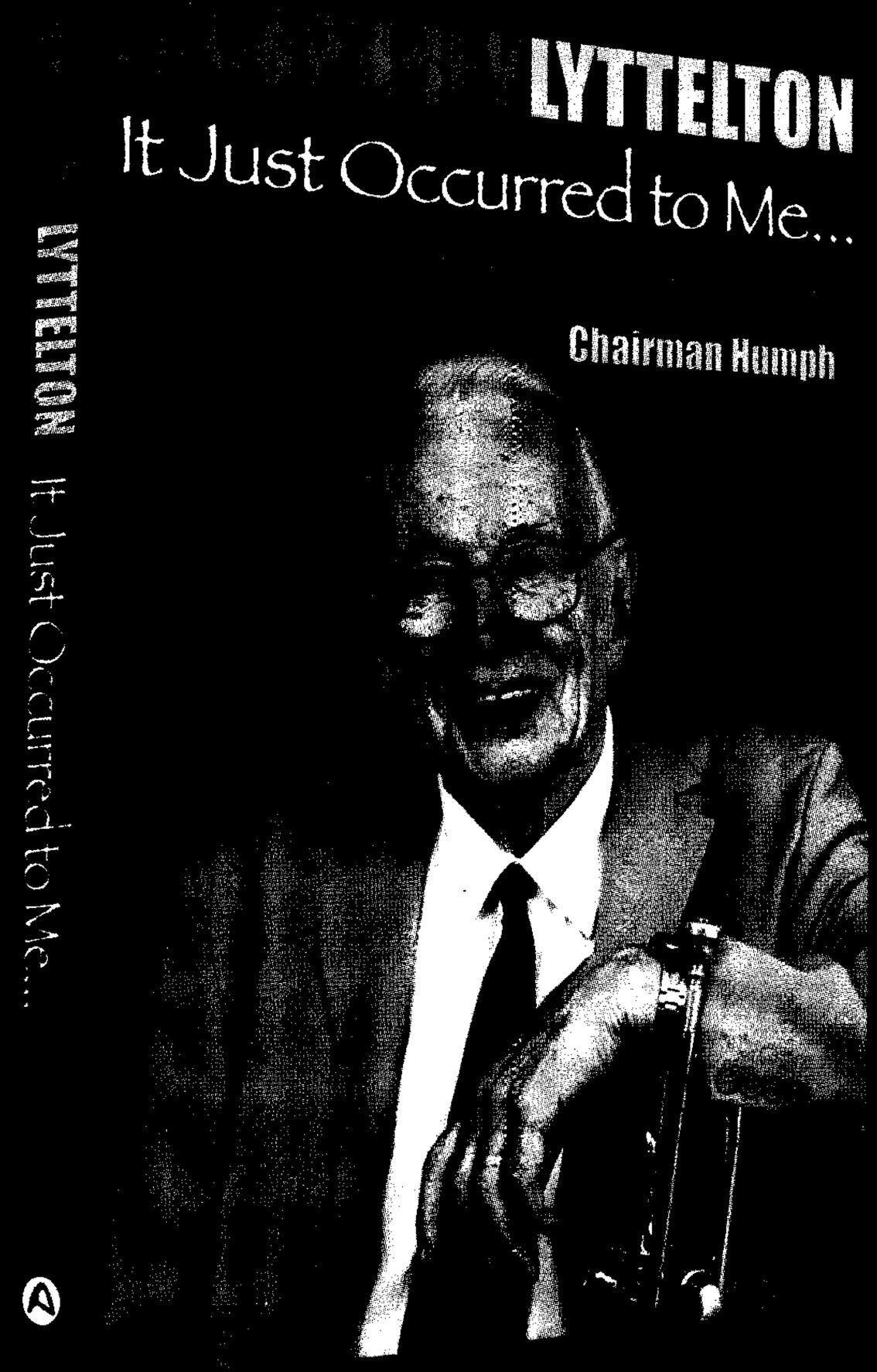

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IT'S NOT FOR ME, it's for my friend: Sex tips for Sad Bastards (from www.thesadbastard.com)

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YES, you can now come direct to a barrister. Tel: 020 7833 9625.

RICS – Complaints – Professional Conduct. Have you had any dealings? Could you share your experiences? Could you reply? Box 178502.

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CHRISTMAS TIME. Mistletoe and wine. I'm not Sir Cliff. But I've got a £1500 fine. S/C: 11-06-41. A/C: 01816675.

DEAR BOB DYLAN, do a song about me? Eye Need Princess Beatrice 24/7. A sign of modern times. David Miedziunik.

WE LOST EVERYTHING (£40K) in dishonest building deal. We would work 8 days a week if we could but as we can only do 7, any help would be immeasurably appreciated. Thanks. S/C: 09-01-26. A/C: 91752603.

LEGITIMATELY put philanthropist on your CV. HSBC, S/C: 40-38-06. A/C: 11457985.

RELENTLESSLY HARD-WORKING academic / musician requires 23K for financial emancipation. Any donation elatedly received. LloydsTSB, S/C: 30-92-07. A/C: 00097935.

FUNDS WANTED URGENTLY for family. Need £10-£10,000. S/C: 60-14-03. A/C: 51538946. pamela.elizabeth@hotmail.co.uk

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SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION can devastate lives and health. Help-line / resource centre hit by crippling security / data protection costs needs £6000 to complete nationwide project. Experienced phone counsellors will be needed. Thank you. S/C: 20-29-68. A/C: 20750255. Reply Box 184665.

CARER FOR DISABLED PEOPLE: Can't do the job any more due to back pain. Need help for new career to help pay training / course fees. Please help. S/C: 30-19-31. A/C: 11987968.

SCOTLAND AGAINST CROOKED LAWYERS (www.sacl.info). Now registered as a Political Party. Will be contesting Scottish Election in May 2007. Election Campaign Funds required – £30,000. Clydesdale Bank. S/C: 82-69-04. A/C: 10070154. Receipt and thanks issued. Party Leader. Tel: 01835 864899.

£64 MILLION NEEDED to bring world peace! And to support me in a life of vice. S/C: 51-50-10. A/C: 41400410.

ARE THERE OTHERS ANGRY at their schooldays at Harrow? Would you like to share experiences? Email: hergens1@btinternet.com

THE END IS PRETTY NIGH: What can I do but ryhme and sigh? Can you spare 50p, for Viagra and a cup of tea? HSBC, S/C: 40-06-19. A/C: 81012762.

I AM A GREAT restaurant manager (honest!) and have found fantastic prospect for reasonable price. Need £30K investment, or any contributions at all would be great. S/C: 30-98-74. A/C: 03001142.

HARD-WORKING RUSSIAN MA is looking for funding to start PhD in Literature and Psychoanalysis. Any help would be appreciated. Nationwide, S/C: 07-44-56. A/C: 37887528. Email: alex-flight5@yandex.ru

BURNT OUT – desperately need break. S/C: 07-01-16. A/C: 47859682.

WANTED. Champion for good looking South African lady who once had it all. Business mind, wicked sense of humour and superb conversationalist. mychamp@hotmail.co.uk

WANT TO GIVE Christmas present to appreciative person! S/C: 08-92-86. A/C: 02117975.

REALLY STRUGGLING following divorce and supporting three children. Can't see any silver linings in foreseeable future. S/C: 07-01-16. A/C: 49657438. Thank you.

NEED £900 to finance dream career training. FDirect, S/C: 40-47-75. A/C: 23965244.

PRE-PROFESSIONAL BALLET STUDENT, 15, needs funds: training / travel. S/C: 20-60-88. A/C: 50903531.

CHILDREN IN NEED! Single parent at Uni to improve standards for all but in meantime anything much appreciated – £5000 would be wonderful. Clydesdale Bank, S/C: 82-65-16. A/C: 10269913.

INTERRACIAL COUPLES' website needs research for PR campaign. www.mixtogether.org, S/C: 20-46-73. A/C: 40233722.

TEMPORARILY NO CASH – need £35,000 secured against home to complete building project. Will repay plus. martin6627@hotmail.com

SICK LITTLE GIRL: My cousin continues her life battle, donations appreciated. Thanks. www.tillyappeal.com

MY PAST NEEDS PRESENTS to help make poverty his story. Future thanks. S/C: 20-02-53. A/C: 50982628.

HUMAN RIGHTS LAW postgraduate dreams of bar; has two jobs and is charity trustee. S/C: 08-92-86. A/C: 12024252.

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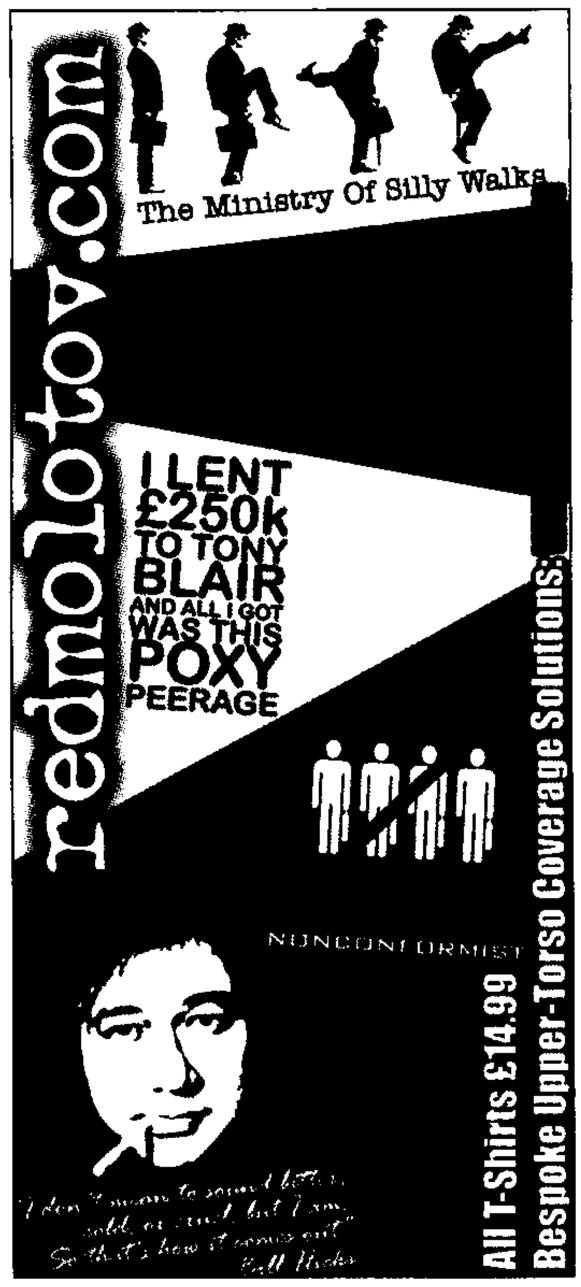
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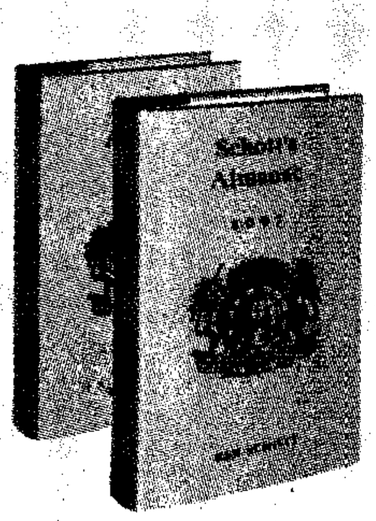

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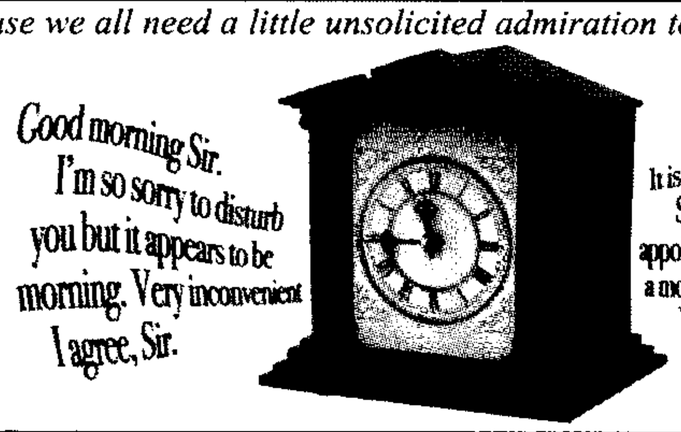
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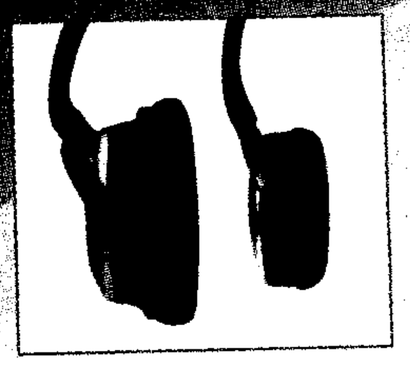

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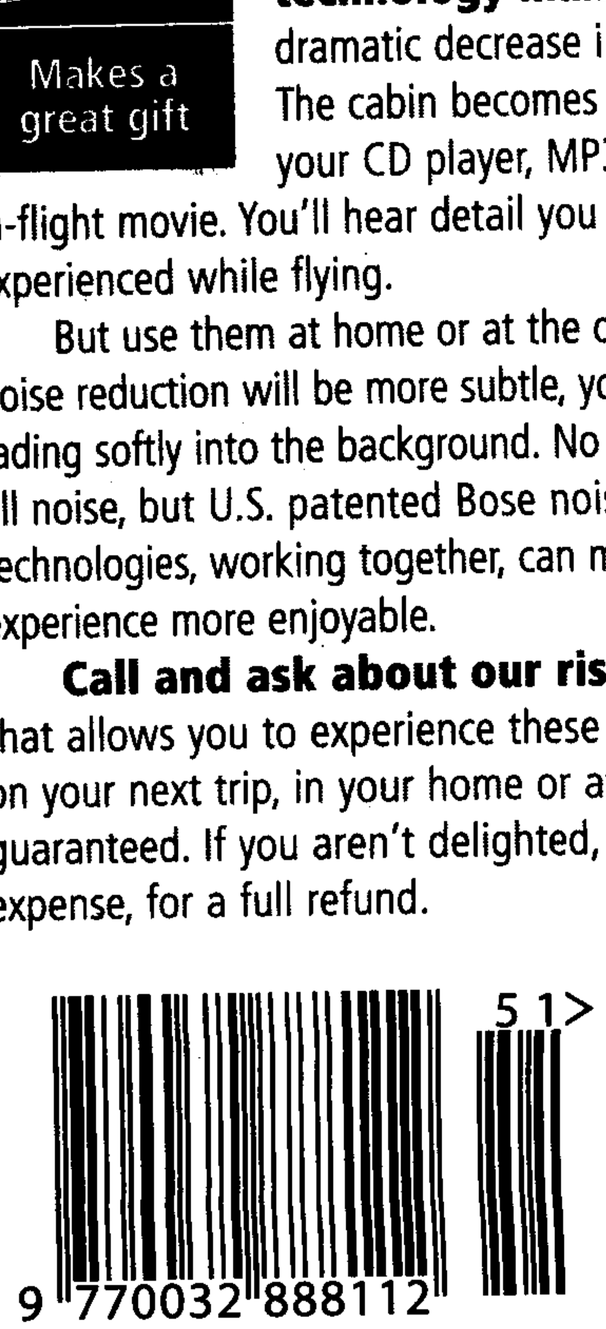

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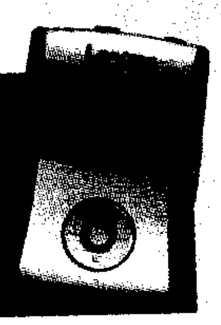

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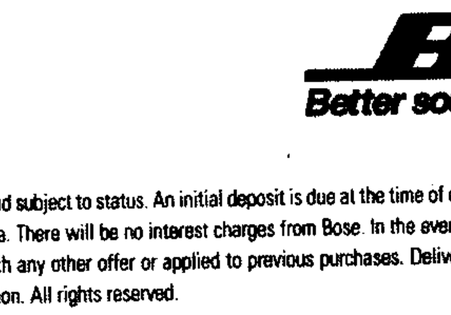

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